Alonzo Delano's California correspondence

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Being letters hitherto uncollected from the Ottawa (Illinois)

Free Trader and the New Orleans *True Delta,* 1849-1852.

Edited with an Introduction and

Notes by Irving McKee. Maps by Stewart Mitchell.

Decorations by Harry O. Diamond

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Acknowledgments

AS IN the case of its previous publications, the Sacramento Book Collectors Club comes before its public with a co-operative enterprise. The present work owes its inception to Mr. Harold Holmes, of Oakland, who first collected transcripts of Alonzo Delano's letters in Eastern newspapers. At the timely suggestion of Mr. Walter Stoddard, Mr. Holmes then very generously turned these over to the Club, along with various photostats of the New Orleans *True Delta*. Mrs. Allan Ottley performed the arduous task of transcribing all the letters, and Mrs. Edgar Sayre arranged for photographic reproduction of maps, illustrations, and other material.

Of the many librarians who generously contributed, two at least must be named. Mr. Arthur Whitenack, of Reddick's Library, Ottawa, Illinois, superintended the photostating of the *Free Trader* letters and researched many local names. Miss Caroline Wenzel and her staff in the California State Library provided the indispensable aid which apparently attends every work dealing with the Golden State's history.

To particularize our debt further would be to present a roster of the Club's members, all of whom extended advice and encouragement. *The Book Committee*:

MICHAEL HARRISON

MARION TINLING

IRVING McKEE

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Tehama Block— *True Delta* Depot—Sacramento City.

THIS illustration appeared on the front page of the New Orleans *True Delta*, May 11, 1851. It is a copy, with modifications, of a wood engraving reproduced in the Sacramento *Union*, March 31, with the comment: “The building measures 34 feet on Front street and 63 on J street. The apartment occupied as the *True Delta* Depot, originally rented for $1,200 per month. What its present rent is we are unable to say, but if newspaper literature pays a profit, the rent ought to be nearly as high

as formerly, as from the Depot are issued semi-monthly, six thousand five hundred copies of the California *True Delta*, the best paper that comes to California."

The *True Delta's* chief modification of the *Union's* illustration was the introduction of figures hawking the New Orleans daily in front of the building. One of these, the later caption informs us, is Alonzo Delano's friend, Colonel Joseph Grant: "The figures of the honest miners returning from the scene of their labors, with well filled pouches hastening to Col. Grant's office to exchange their dust for legal coin and *True Deltas* —the *True Delta* agents displaying the favorite she et, and the portly figure of the indefatigable Col. Grant, as he stands on the balcony with a pile of *True Deltas* under his left arm, while in his right hand he holds a copy of the latest issue, unfolded to the admiring gaze of the returned miners—are all sketched to the life."

Introduction

"SIXTY, seventy, or eighty years ago, Old Block needed no introduction to his public." Thus begins an account of Alonzo Delano* which is at once definitive and sympathetically humorous.* The present editor acknowledges at the outset a considerable debt to the late Ezra Dane, who first properly introduced California's genial and whimsical Forty-Niner to the twentieth century. With charm and delicacy Dane invoked the magnificent nose, in spite—or because—of which Old Block became a prodigy fondly cherished throughout the State and a citizen deeply respected in Grass Valley.

Pronounced DELLano.
G. Ezra Dane, ed., *Alonzo Delano's Pen-Knife Sketches, or Chips of the Old Block* (San Francisco, 1934), v-xxii.

Delano was born July 2, 1806, at Aurora, New York, the tenth of the eleven children of Dr. Frederick Delano and his wife, Joanna Doty. The worthy physician was himself a great-grandson of Jonathan De La Noye, an offspring of French Huguenots. De La Noye, in turn, was the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Thus our humorist can be termed a

third cousin, twice removed, of the thirty-second President. And for three centuries the members of this prolific clan generally pronounced the name Delano as did the Roosevelts.*

Joel A. Delano, *Genealogy, History, and Alliances of the American House of Delano, 1621 to 1899* (New York, 1899), 294-505. The town of Delano in Kern County, however, is pronounced DeLAYno, although named in 1873 after another of Alonzo's cousins, Columbus Delano (1809-1896), Secretary of the Interior under President Grant. Erwin A. Gudde, *California Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Berkeley, 1949).

But Alonzo knew nothing of his most illustrious American relatives; as Dane puts it, "he was the plainest of plain Americans." Educated in the local academy, he embarked at the age of fifteen upon a career of counter-jumping which took him to various frontier settlements of Ohio and Indiana. When he revisited his native Aurora in 1830 to woo and wed Mary Burt, he was a lean young man, some five feet ten inches in height, with brown hair and blue eyes—and a conspicuous nose.* He later recalled his amatory success with typical self-deprecation and gallantry: "I fooled one good looking girl, and pulled the wool over her eyes in such a way as to make her believe I was a handsome young scamp, and she took me for better or worse, and is now the mother of my children."* These xii last, a son named Fred and a daughter Harriet, were born about 1833 and 1843 respectively, probably at South Bend, Indiana, where Delano conducted a general store. July, 1848, found him at Ottawa, Illinois, presumably engaged in the same occupation; his social and fraternal success here is indicated by the fact that he was Noble Grand, or first officer, of the original Ottawa Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Here he might have remained, except for two decisive circumstances: he was afflicted with consumption, and gold had been discovered in California:*

My constitution had suffered sad inroads by disease incident to western climate, and my physician frankly told me, that a change of residence and more bodily exertion was absolutely necessary to effect a radical change in my system—in fact, that my life depended upon such a change, and I finally concluded to adopt his advice. About this time, the astonishing accounts of the vast deposits of gold in California reached us, and besides the fever of the body, I was suddenly seized with the fever of the mind for gold; and in hopes of receiving a speedy cure for the ills both of body and

mind, I turned my attention “westward ho!” and immediately commenced making arrangements for my departure.”*

Such was the spirit of this Argonaut, who fancied the man-killing California mining country as a health resort.

Marion V. Conaway, Delano's neighbor at Grass Valley, 1870-1874, in a letter to Milton J. Ferguson, March 13, 1919, Ms. in the California State Library. See also the caricature by Charles Nahl in *Pen-Knife Sketches*, frontispiece.
Alonzo Delano, *Across the Plains and Among the Diggings* (New York, 1936), 9-10. This was originally published as *Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings* (Auburn and Buffalo, 1854).
Mary Delano Fletcher, M.D. (1830-1914), a god-daughter of Delano, suggested the birth dates of his children and the nature of his illness in an undated letter to James L. Gillis, Ms. in the California State Library. Harriet was nine years old in 1852. *Pen-Knife Sketches*, 58. For his Ottawa lodge, see *Ottawa: Old and New, a Complete History of Ottawa, Illinois (Ottawa, 1912-1914), 156-157.*
Across the Plains, 1.

A “California Company” had been formed at Dayton, a village situated a few miles above Ottawa on the Fox River, under the command of “Captain” Jesse Green. St. Joseph, Missouri, was to be the company's first place of rendezvous. Being a man of some substance, Delano purchased cattle and a wagon, dispatched the first across country under hired escort, and shipped the second by water to St. Joseph. In addition he engaged three young Ottawans, Matthew Harris, Robert Brown, and Eben Smith, to assist him on the journey and to repay him for their share of supplies and equipment with one half the profit they would earn during the first year away from home—“a contract which was then common.” Thereupon, with Harris, Brown, Smith, and a fourth Ottawan named Isaac H. Fredenburg as “the companions of my mess,” Delano bade farewell to wife and children on April 5, 1849, and proceeded by wagon to Peru, Illinois, a day's ride down the Illinois River. That evening they boarded the steamer *Revolution* for St. Louis.*

Ibid., 1, 107.

How or when Delano first manifested journalistic propensities we shall probably never know. Certain it is, however, that before his xiii departure he agreed with the brothers William and Moses Osman, proprietors of the Ottawa weekly *Free Trader*, to write a “California Correspondence” in exchange for one or more mail subscriptions. Besides penning the letters, he kept a journal

which also appeared, in part, in the *Free Trader*, and he later simultaneously maintained a second correspondence with the New Orleans *True Delta*. The journal formed the basis of Delano's second book, *Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings* (1854). But the thirty-six letters, of which he evidently did not retain copies, contain matter of such interest as to deserve rescue from the newspaper files in which they have lain, buried and forgotten, for more than a hundred years.

Dating from April 19, 1849, to August 1, 1852, they relate graphically the events of the river voyage to St. Joseph, the hazardous overland journey, and the sojourns in Sacramento, the mines, San Francisco, and points north. The saving grace of humor, for which Delano was later to achieve fame under his *nom de plume*, is present in judicious quantities, but the letters are essentially serious and realistic. For our correspondent was keenly aware that his public consisted of hardhanded farmers and merchants who looked for an accurate report of the pains as well as the pleasures of the adventure. He thus turns appropriately from a sparkling narrative of coffee-making on an overcrowded river steamboat to the death by cholera of a member of a Virginia company: "The first use made of the spade that was taken to turn up the golden sands of California, was to bury one of their own companions amid the rocky bluffs of the Missouri" (April 19).

Scientific historians of the Great Gold Rush may discover little that is essentially new in the letters, but *aficionados* will detect an authentic flavor of considerable value. For here we see the Forty-Niners close up, in their broadbrimmed hats, their checked and woolen shirts, and their high boots. They are a patriotic lot, ready to chase all foreigners—whether Indian, Mexican, or British—out of their own California (in which they had not yet set foot). But they are also peaceable and respectable, or as Delano writes, "they are almost entirely composed of energetic, well-informed, resolute law-and-order men, who have characters at home, and who cannot at once depart from the habits and mental training from childhood of a civilized and moral community" (April 21). Like Delano, and like later generations of American voyagers, they yearn continually for mail from "the States;" upon quitting St. Joseph for the Indian country, our correspondent poignantly notes: "I got no letters from home and have not received the least word from any of my friends since I left, and

now, probably, shall not" (April 30). Ten months of toil and danger without a word from Ottawa lay ahead; only a vision as of the Promised Land sustained him and his fellows.

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The Dayton (Illinois) Company, with which Delano had cast his lot, committed two costly errors. In attempting to follow the "Nemaha Cut-off" some distance north of St. Joseph, it got lost, and instead of saving time fell eight or ten days behind those who from the start had stuck to the St. Joseph Road. Three harrowing weeks after having crossed the Missouri, the train at last found the Road, only to encounter two more weeks of cold and rainy weather which benumbed the emigrants' fingers "while pitching tents, guarding cattle, preparing meals, gathering fuel so scantily distributed, and a thousand *et ceteras*" (October 12). To top it all, Delano became ill and feverish from exposure and had to ride the wagon for almost a week. For once he lost faith, temporarily, in the male humanity around him, denouncing to Mary Delano "the narrow-minded ribaldry—the ceaseless strife which is constantly marring the tranquility of such a crowd—a mass of men in which each individual acts independent of all the rest, caring for none but himself, which renders it most insufferable" (September 13). He recovered just in time to reconcile himself to eighty-eight days of burning sun and sand across what is now Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada, where "the utmost vigilance is required to keep marauding bands of Indians from stealing or maiming your cattle."

At the Humboldt River the company committed what Delano considered its second serious mistake—pursuing the Lassen Trail, "by which we lost three weeks' time in getting in, and on account of which we ran short of provisions and had to pass four hundred miles through hostile Indians that kept us on the lookout day and night" (October 12). But "Lawson's," the settlement (like the trail) founded by Peter Lassen, was now only three weeks away, via Fandango Pass, the Pit River, and the Sacramento. Delano arrived there intact on September 17, reporting to his wife that "my health is as good as it ever was, and I can endure any amount of fatigue."

But this satisfaction did not suffice: "Any man who makes a trip by land to California deserves to find a fortune" (October 12); like many another, Delano was understandably chagrined when the

fortune did not immediately materialize. Disappointment had vent in observations unfavorable to the Sacramento Valley, such as: “I would not exchange a good farm on one of our rich prairies for the whole of it” (September 30); he disliked the regular late-summer drought and could see little prospect of agricultural wealth in all California. (Three years later he manfully confessed how wrong he had been about this.) His wealth now consisted, apparently, of a wagon, a yoke of oxen, and the sum of four dollars. Never lacking in friends, however, he borrowed two hundred dollars from Dr. M. B. Angle, who had prospered in the mines, and bought a load of provisions which he “designed to sell or live upon” until he could succeed at mining. In company with F. C. Pomeroy, another old xv acquaintance, he set out on October 1 for the “upper diggings” of the Feather River. At Dawlytown, adjoining Bidwell Bar on the South Fork, Delano and Pomeroy opened a store on the 10th.*

Across the Plains, 52, 109-112.

News went to Ottawa of deflated mining and inflated prices, the latter enabling the partners to show a profit of six hundred dollars in two weeks. On October 25 Delano drove back to Sacramento to replenish their stock, but torrential rains caused the loss of an ox in fording the Yuba River and prolonged the return trip by six weeks, three of which he passed at “Mud Hill” near Oroville.* His letter of November 19 is replete with vivid details of that hard season, when poverty-stricken miners by the hundreds underwent exposure to the elements, malnutrition, and disease. Back at Dawlytown, he found the camp largely deserted, Dame Rumor having lured the emigrants to the South Fork's upper reaches. A bout with the ague detained Delano for three weeks; then on January 2, 1850, he set out with Pomeroy and two others for the latest El Dorado. Laborious ascents through rain and snow brought them to two bars in the neighborhood of Stringtown, one of which they named Ottawa; in accordance with a new miners' “law,” they commenced working the claims within ten days of discovery.*

Ibid., 113-119.
Ibid., 119-122.

At Mud Hill, Delano had met and been host to “Colonel” Joseph Grant, versatile agent of the New Orleans *Daily True Delta* and a veteran of the upper diggings. In February a gracious letter and a

bundle of *True Deltas* —latest news from the States—arrived at Stringtown from Grant, now in Sacramento. The letter asked Delano to undertake a California Correspondence for the benefit of a vast and expectant Louisiana public; his enthusiastic reply of February 16 is the first of eighteen letters published in the *True Delta*. But the thrill of solicited authorship was nothing compared to the receipt, late that month, of his first letter from Illinois, from Mary Delano: "This I walked fifteen miles [to Dawlytown] to get when I heard of the arrival of the Express a week ago, and I would have walked a hundred for another with the greatest of pleasure" (March 2). He returned to Ottawa Bar, where the company now apparently consisted of nine members, with redoubled vigor:

More labor, more exposure; but " *veni, vidi, vici*." We took our rations again, and axes, and set out. The logs were cut and rolled together, shingles split out of the beautiful pine and put on the roof, a large fireplace and chimney built, stools, shelves, bedsteads, and door made, &c., &c., all of which occupied about ten days, and it rained most of the time, while two more of the company were engaged in getting up provisions. At last we were comfortably settled in the best quarters which I have found in California, with enough to eat, such as it is, a good roof over us, and xvi any amount of hard work before us, and perhaps not a dollar in either bar to repay our toil, or it may be a fortune (March 22).

High water prevented mining operations in April, and Delano visited mushrooming Sacramento, and then Marysville, where a thousand newcomers inhabited buildings of cloth and wood. Five months before "but a single adobe house" had marked the place. Here he witnessed a jury trial of two men caught red-handed in grand larceny; they were sentenced "each to receive one hundred lashes on the bare back, and, if found in town in the morning, a fine of a thousand dollars and two years' labor in the chain gang of San Francisco. Sentence was immediately executed" (April 4). As he adds, Delano himself was nearly " *strapped*" at the time, possessing a total capital of only thirty-two dollars—"enough to sustain me one week, as the price of board then ranged." Nothing if not adaptaable, he set himself up in Marysville as a miniature painter ("having a little skill in drawing"); in three weeks, at an ounce a head, he cleared four hundred dollars. Half of this went down the drain of speculation in "paper town lots." The rest, in partnership with one T. E. Gray of Florida, he invested in a real estate claim on the Feather about twenty miles above Marysville. Here,

adjoining two villages of Indians, one of them called Oleepa, Gray and Delano determined to lay out a town, open a tent store and a tent hotel, and await customers. In the course of these labors our correspondent exercised his talents as artist and physician (the latter a family inheritance) to win popularity among the scantily clad Oleepans:*

There are about fifty naked wretches sitting on the ground in front of my building, in the sun, laughing, singing, and taking comfort, all playing the same tune and beating time with their hands on their bodies, for it is slap, slap, slap, as the tormenting mosquitoes bore into their naked, copper-colored hides (May 8).

A few days later he penned a semi-humorous account of how he successfully treated an inflammation behind Chief Oleepa's ear with horse liniment and an opium pill; this and other cures gained him such credit that he was able to report exhaustively on intimate observations of Maidu architecture, interior decoration, culinary arts, religion, dancing, dialects, burial rites, courtship, marriage, morals, gambling, and superstitions (May 12).

Ibid., 127-128.

A letter dated June 14 is devoted to the fabulous Jim Beckwourth, Indian-fighter, scout, and explorer, who discovered a low-altitude pass over the Sierra subsequently named for him. Another (June 25) recounts the strenuous but fruitless adventures of his friends, Colonel Grant and Captain John Freeland, in the Feather xvii River diggings the previous November; it closes with a narrative of a bloody battle between emigrants and Indians in Nevada one summer day of '49.

The Oleepa business ended in financial failure.* During the last days of June I had my affairs in the Valley arranged and came here to superintend the working of this claim," Delano writes from Stringtown (July 22), in introduction of a series of narrow escapes—from a falling tree, a steep mountain precipice, and a scorpion's sting in the night. A week later the humor waxes mellower as he describes the snug little cabin at Stringtown, its old-fashioned fireplace, bake kettle, and yeast pail, with which he is particularly familiar since "I am the cook." Other furnishings include a library —a volume of Shakespeare, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, a work of natural philosophy, and a

geological treatise—all of which he laboriously carried from St. Joseph. An old violin hangs on the wall, and thereby also hangs the sad tale of old Turner, Henry County (Illinois) fiddler, who died in January and now lies buried in the hillside above the cabin. Delano serves as juror in a civil action, weighing the conflicting claims of two mining companies; the verdict in favor of one is acquiesced in by the other without a murmur (July 29).

Ibid., 146.

His own group, now comprising "four large messes or companies," invested "over thirteen thousand dollars in labor" at Stringtown, but no treasure revealed itself. Meanwhile the notorious Gold Lake fever swept the diggings: up in the mountains northeast of Stringtown, some forty miles as the crow flies, there was a mountain full of gold and a lake lined with it. Miners by the hundreds girded their loins for one more desperate sortie, and expeditions by the score converged upon the wilds north of the Yuba.* Early in August, Delano hopefully formed a partnership with some friends at Marysville in a trading post to be established in the Gold Lake region. Having secured a stock of goods, a junior clerk (American), and a muleteer (Mexican), he set out on August 14. The journey over mountain trails occupied about two weeks, in the course of which three mules vanished, our adventurer dismissed the Mexican for insubordination, and precipices claimed their moiety of the goods. But by September, Delano had established himself in a mountain camp on Nelson Creek called Independence Bar, with a thousand or two potential patrons around him.*

Gudde, "Gold Lake," *California Place Names*.
Across the Plains, 146-151.

"In this pure and bracing atmosphere there is no sickness," he announces to readers of the *Free Trader*, and then relates the hardships of newly-arrived emigrants who have barely survived the droughts and snows of 1850, only to face more formidable perils:

We shall see more suffering, more destitution this winter than there ever has been, and although there is gold in the mountains, the indefatigable attempt to get it of those who came a year ago without success, wheresoever courage, strength and manhood have been used to their full extent,

surely should convince you at home that it is folly to forsake a living business at home and come here in the desperate search of gold.

Moreover, affairs in the Valley have deteriorated; “chill, fevers, ague, and flux” prevail, and the sanguinary Squatter Riots in Sacramento, August 14 and 15, involving the proponents and opponents of Sutter's Mexican land title, resulted in the killing of seven men, including the Sheriff, and the wounding of a half dozen others (September 1).* The gloom thickens in the ensuing weeks: “The miners have been mostly frightened away by a succession of stormy weather, rain in the valleys and snow in the mountains...I went out and rocked the cradle an hour or so for pastime, and got only twenty-five cents; so I gave it up.” He completely (but not irrevocably) loses faith in California: “Oregon will be the greatest of the two.” The only enjoyments left in life are sociable repasts with the miners and hours devoted to sketching the scenery and contemplating an excursion to Gold Lake and Gold Mountain (October 20). This last is the subject of a letter full of geological observation (buttressed by the library) and unfulfilled yearning for treasure. But the end of October finds him back at Marysville, “in the throng of civilized man—a washed, combed and shaven *hombre*” (October 31); the next week he is in Sacramento, “a citizen of the world with nothing to do”—but report on the living and dying during the city's great cholera epidemic (November 5).* The next day he is in San Francisco.

Sacramento *Transcript*, August 15-16, 1850.
History of Sacramento (Oakland, 1880), 56-57.

In this Phoenix of the Pacific (it had already burned down four times),* Delano becomes “a dweller on Long Wharf, and a dealer in squashes and cabbages”—and correspondent for another newspaper. This was the *California Daily Courier*, which, during the next two and a half years, published the *jeux d'esprit* to be collected in 1853 as *Pen-Knife Sketches, or Chips of the Old Block*, his first book.* According to one contemporary journalist, he was well paid for the correspondence; more certainly, these refinements of his experiences in the upper diggings—for such they largely were—account for much of his subsequent reputation as co-founder with “John Phoenix” (George Horatio Derby) of California humor, “fluttering,” as Ezra Dane analyzes it, “between absurdity and

xix pathos."* The sojourn in San Francisco also resulted in three letters celebrating with appropriate irony the luxuries of city life as contrasted to the enforced asceticism of Independence Bar and environs. A notable preliminary was the steamboat voyage down the Sacramento River financed by the genial Colonel Grant—"Everything in tip-top style, cabins, tables, staterooms, magnificent; cook, steward, chamber-boy, and waiter, civil and obliging, and the captain a gentleman." Then comes the spectacle of the Bay, jammed with ships whose masts form "a vast forest of dead pines;" streets full of people wearing respectable clothes; "carts, drays, candy stands, bookracks, newsboys, and the Lord knows what all"—and a woman! With Grant he visits the barque *Constance*, Captain John Barry, out of Salem; fries a mess of griddle cakes, and hears Captain Welsh's tales of the Ryukyu Islands (November 15).

Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *Annals of San Francsico* (New York, 1855), 241, 274, 277, 290.
San Francisco *California Daily Courier*, June 12, 1851.
Pen-Knife Sketches, iv, x-xi.

Weighing two seasons in the diggings, Delano finds he has nothing to show but a farm at Oleepa and memories. He warns his New Orleans readers of imminent deflation in San Francisco (January 15, 1851) and his Ottawa public of inflated tales from the placers. But after four months he alters his view of business prospects in the new seaport: "I think it must become one of the most important cities on the Pacific." If only his wife and children were with him, he would prefer living here "to any town east of the Rocky Mountains." He even promises not to return to Ottawa if Editor Osman will pass the hat and pay the three dependent Delanos' passage. (Osman apparently preferred to have his correspondent come back.) He describes the Oriental inhabitants, and Colonel Joseph Watkins of Virginia, who knew Jefferson and Marshall in the flesh, and he reports on the new (to California) science of quartz mining which promises to supplant the old placer (April 1).

Quartz mining brings him back for a brief visit to the diggings. In March he became San Francisco agent for the Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company;* in June he locates a vein of quartz at Grass Valley for the company, sells out his stock of merchandise, and invests the proceeds in the vein. "The desire for wealth brought me here," he writes from Grass Valley, "and the weary search for gold hath made misery often my companion; yet, although I have not been completely successful

and have run many risks, I am not discouraged and will still plod on." Thereupon follows an account of quartz prospects in the vicinity (June 11), filling a column and a half in the *True Delta*.

Meanwhile a fire devastated San Francisco in May;* having lost over twelve hundred dollars, Delano castigates xx the criminal element which he believes responsible. Then, temporarily re-established in his San Francisco office, he effectively defends himself against some vicious gossip:

As your country [Ottawa] is great for reports, I have been amused—not offended—at one I recently heard respecting myself and to this effect, "that Delano provided nothing for his family when he left home, that he has sent them nothing since he has been here, and that he traveled across the plains with another woman." As for the first two, it may spoil a good story when I refer the lovers of the dark side to my own family for the truth of the two first counts, and for the third, I simply ask those who traveled in our train to state the facts. As for women, I did save the life of one here in San Francisco, and gave her shelter and protection after the fire for two or three days, until she got a situation with Captain Sutter's family at one thousand dollars a year; and could you hear her story, it would be that of respect, and that even here a *man* may do a *good* deed which he may not blush to own. Except for this one, who by circumstances was thrown upon my protection by a course of events—an interesting tale of itself—when a man should blush *not* to do as I did, and when I was encouraged by pious and good people of both sexes, there are not three other females in California that even know my name; and I do not blush, nor need any of my friends blush for any act of mine since I have been in this God-forsaken land, nor will they have occasion to.

From slanderers he turns to thieves and murderers who provoked the San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1851; he applauds its necessary usurpation of powers maladministered by a corrupt executive and judiciary. Felonies are again out of hand, but reports of rampant prostitution are exaggerated (June 13).

His business card reads: "Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company—A. Delano, Agent—Office, opposite New World Hotel, on Long Wharf, where a large number of specimens can be inspected." San Francisco *Pacific News*, March 11-21, 1851.

This was the fifth of six "great fires," on December 24, 1849; May 4, June 14, and September 17, 1850; May 4 and June 22, 1851. Soulé *et al., Annals*, 241, 274, 277, 290, 329, 345.

Around Grass Valley the peaceable miners, tending seven crushing mills, organized Vigilance Committees of their own: “One was formed here last night, and we are ready to pay our respects to all scoundrels who may be inclined to pay us a visit.” Prices are falling, but the miners raise their own vegetables. “We have a daily stage and mail passing through from Sacramento City to Nevada City, although a year ago a road was not opened, and the Indians were killing and driving off the whites” (June 29). A Vigilance Committee has commenced drastic operations in Sacramento (August 1). Another “great fire,” San Francisco's sixth in three years, has finally wiped out Delano's office there, but he consoles himself with a monthly salary of three hundred dollars now tendered him by the Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company in exchange for his services as its Grass Valley superintendent. He bids farewell to the *Free Trader* with a facetious epistle: “I find my time so much occupied that I shall be unable to continue my correspondence with your paper, and of course must relinquish all claim on you for sending xxi your paper either to me or to my friends on my account . . . There is lots of news, but the papers have it all, and letter-writers are getting below par. —Money is scarce and taters is fell” (August 6).

But there are five more letters to the *True Delta*. He reveals the new wonders of irrigation as applied to quartz mining: “Rivers and creeks are turned from their channels and carried by canals along mountains, over hills, across gulches, by means of aqueducts, for forty miles or more, thus distributing the indispensable element to the miner for separating the gold from the earth and opening to man rich deposits which could not be worked without water.” An estimated two thousand miners are at work in the Grass Valley region, attracting an unspecified number of another kind of gold-digger: “it too often happens here that females who have borne unexceptionable characters at home, adopt the code of morals of the country and instead of endeavoring to stem the current, float along with it” (August 30). The last letter from Grass Valley notes improvements in machinery and ore-refining, as well as the presence of distinguished foreign visitors and the fact that the Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company, Delano's employer, has sold out to the Rocky Bar Company (September 29). Fancy-free again, he takes stagecoach passage to Shasta City, some 175 miles north of Sacramento. With indefatigable enthusiasm he reports mysteries of the Valley and mountains newly opened to civilization, or soon to be: “The plain was dotted with

large herds of elk, antelope, and deer which in seeming security scarcely moved beyond gunshot from us, barely raising their heads with curiosity as we passed, as if to enquire what the devil we were doing on their stamping ground, while we on our part were smacking our lips with the poetic thought of a broiled steak from their haunches." He studies the funeral rites of the Colusa Indians and speculates on the coming conquest of the northern Coast Range: "the time will soon come when the attention of the indomitable Yankee will be diverted from the eastern mountains toward the West, and then the tales of suffering, of toil and blood, of savage warfare and Christian cupidity, will find a locale in the broad, broken belt between the Pacific Ocean and the Valley of the Sacramento." His imagination bridges the gap in the road from Shasta to Shasta Butte (now Yreka) and he contemplates unlimited treasure just out of reach: "In the neighborhood of Shasta I observed vast quantities of auriferous quartz, more than can be exhausted in hundreds of years, and I also saw many specimens which were brought in from Shasta Butte City, from Scott and Trinity rivers and their affluents, indeed in all directions, north and eastward, for an hundred miles or more" (October 20).

Early in the spring of 1852, Delano boarded ship for New York, via Nicaragua, for a family reunion at Aurora. Here his wife and children met him on May 1. But "ill health turned my thoughts xxii again to California,"* and the next month finds him at Parkman, Ohio, whence he addresses the *True Delta* once more on the subject of the Golden State: "California is indeed a great country, with a beautiful climate and fertile soil, and in this last particular I have been compelled to change my opinion." He also feels compelled, however, to warn emigrants against the danger of surplus agricultural production, the scarcity of minable gold, and the ever-present hardships of the westward journey by whatever route: "I would rather take a family to California by the land route, provided the emigration *did not exceed ten thousand*, than through Central America, with the present facilities of traveling up the San Juan River and to San Juan del Sur" (June, 1852). His last California Correspondence, also from Parkman, displays most confidence in the new State: "the elements of prosperity are at work which, in an unparalleled short period in the history of nations, must place it among the most prominent States of the Union for wealth and extensive business operations." The final letter also foreshadows a new connection which was to sustain him for the

next four years: “Livingston and Wells are known among the successful pioneers of expresses, and I see by the public papers that they are extending their operations by association to California under the name of Wells, Fargo and Company . . . Some of those connected with them I have known from childhood, and I speak understandingly when I say that more energetic, faithful, and perfectly responsible men do not exist in any express company than these” (August 1). Delano failed to mention—perhaps because it might have given his letter an air of bias—the fact that he had been appointed Grass Valley agent for this company, organized by two fellow Aurorans, Henry Wells and Edwin B. Morgan, and William G. Fargo of nearby Auburn.*

Pen-Knife Sketches 58.
See the articles on Wells, Morgan, and Fargo in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Thus end the letters which concern us here. While they reposed in the dust-gathering files of the *Free Trader* and the *True Delta*, their author prospered in the California mountain town of his adoption. The Grass Valley *Telegraph* advertised him as agent for “Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express and Banking Exchange Office, opposite Beatty House, Main St.” Two events distinguished his tenure. One morning during the financial panic of 1855 a throng of excited depositors pressed against the agency door while Delano pondered a message from his superior, the San Francisco manager, to suspend payment. But when he opened the door at the appointed hour, according to the *Telegraph*, “he mounted the counter, and told the people to ‘Come on, he would pay out to the last dollar, and if that was not enough his own property should go.’ This, however, proved unnecessary, as he had more than sufficient on hand. The confidence xxiii in the house was fully restored.”* The timorous San Francisco manager was replaced and, two weeks later, the citizens of Grass Valley elected Delano their treasurer.

Grass Valley *Telegraph*, February 27, 1855, as quoted in *Pen-Knife Sketches*, xv.

The second event was a fire which swept the town on September 13 and 14 following. Not a single one of the three hundred buildings which had comprised the business section remained intact. In later years the old inhabitants were to remember as the turning point in their despair an incident vividly narrated by Ezra Dane:

Something was moving down the hill from the west end of town. It was a frame shanty, on rollers. And who was the figure in the rumpled frock coat directing its progress? A profile view identified him as Old Block, setting an example of California courage for the citizens. A willing crowd gathered to assist in backing the building up against a brick vault, which was hot but still standing among the ruins where the express agency had been. A few minutes later a ten-foot scantling was nailed over the door, roughly lettered “Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express Office”—and Old Block, so the county history tells us, “stood smiling behind his counter, amid the smouldering ruins and with the ground still warm beneath his feet, ready, as he said, ‘to attend to business.’”*

Pen-Knife Sketches, xvi. Cf. *History of Nevada County* (Oakland, 1880), 66.

Henceforth, with the honorary title of “Captain” (in deference to his leadership in '49), Delano somehow symbolized municipal progress. But his fame was more than local. The editors of the Sacramento *Union* collected his *California Courier* pieces under the title *Pen-Knife Sketches*, with illustrations by Charles Nahl, in 1853; a second edition, without the illustrations, came out the following year. Also in 1854 Delano's journal appeared, with revisions, as *Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings*. And finally, the same year, he became somewhat ludicrously associated with the peripatetic dancer, Lola Montez, who, after entertaining San Francisco with her art and her history as a former mistress of Bohemian royalty, had come to Grass Valley to live with a newly acquired husband. Too much the prima donna for her neighbors, however, Lola was soon being spoofed not only in the Valley but farther abroad—with Old Block as her “private secretary”: “The Grass Valley *Telegraph* informs us,” the San Francisco *Golden Era* gleefully informed the world, “that ‘the divine Lola,’ in company with our friend ‘Old Block’ and others, have gone to the Sierra Nevada Mountains.” Two weeks later, according to the same journal, Delano forwarded a complete account of his experiences in Lola's employ. After the party crossed Donner Pass and encamped for the night, disaster struck: “Lola found vent, either for an exuberance of feeling or indignation, at the supposed want of consideration for xxiv her rank manifested by some of the party, by quarreling with her ‘private secretary’ during the entire of one long, cold night; and the next morning a solitary horseman might have been seen descending the western slope of the Sierra Nevadas, in the direction of Grass Valley. That man was the author of ‘Chips.’” The party's cook

also deserted, along with the pack mules, so that a very angry and hungry Lola walked into Grass Valley twenty-four hours later.* In various forms the story was retold for some years.

San Francisco *Golden Era*, July 23 and August 6, 1854.

Delano's prose and verse meandered through a number of publications, including the *Union*, the *California Farmer*, the *Golden Era*, the *Telegraph*, the *Hesperian, Hutchings' California Magazine*, Edwin F. Bean's *History & Directory of Nevada County*, and even the New York *Times*. In 1856 another collection entitled *Old Block's Sketch Book, or Tales of California Life* and a *jeu d'esprit* called *The Idle and Industrious Miner* came off the press. The following year he published *A Live Woman in the Mines, or Pike County Ahead! A Local Play in Two Acts*. Although Delano originally composed this drama, apparently, for Lola Montez (perhaps as a peace offering), no record comes to hand of her having appeared in it; one historian indicates that it was performed in its author's time and another hails it as "the most distinctively Californian of the plays produced by the golden era."* Finally, a pamphlet contrasting the old and new ways of going to California appeared with the title, *The Central Pacific, or '49 and '69, by Old Block*.

George R. MacMinn, *The Theater of the Golden Era in California* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1941), 251. Cf. Sacramento *Democratic State Journal*, January 3, 1856, and Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California* (7 vols., San Francisco, 1884-1890), VI, 157.

Delano became a Master Mason and a member of the Town Council, and by 1856 achieved sufficient worldly success to resign the Wells, Fargo agency, open his own bank, and fetch his daughter Harriet from Ohio. Mary remained there to care for their invalid son, Fred, who died about a year later; she then rejoined her husband and daughter at Grass Valley. But tragedy struck the family again when Harriet lost her mind and had to be taken to an asylum near the ancestral home in New York. This sad circumstance probably accounts for Delano's trip of 1866 to Nicaragua, whence he dispatched his humorless "Nicaragua Letters" to the *Union*. Five years after his return, in 1871, his patient wife died.*

Mary Delano Fletcher, *op. cit.; Pen-Knife Sketches*, xvi-xix; *Journal of Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the State of California* (2 vols., San Francisco, 1857), I, 362; 55, 185.

With a cashier to manage the bank and a Chinaman to maintain his house, Captain Delano at sixty-five returned to his early faith in Grass Valley quartz mining, which he now backed with considerable investments. In 1872, at Truckee, he married Miss Maria Harmon of Warren, Ohio, a handsome woman in her early forties; xxv the Grass Valley *Union* was pleased to “chronicle the permanent addition to our society of a lady so well known and highly esteemed in our community.” The following year he lectured at Hamilton Hall, Grass Valley, on the community's glowing future in mining, but his bank fell into difficulty in 1874. Suddenly his health broke, and he died on September 8 of that year, bidding Maria farewell with kind and courageous words: “Give my love to all my friends. Tell them that I was not afraid to die, and that I left the earth without ill feeling towards anybody.” Almost the entire population of Grass Valley turned out for the funeral and burial, beside Mary Delano, in Greenwood Cemetery. Although his affairs seemed unpromising at the time of his death, within two years enough was realized to pay the bank's depositors in full and to provide for his widow and unfortunate daughter. And in the course of the next sixty years the mines of Grass Valley yielded more than a hundred million dollars.

“I don't suppose that California owes those hundred millions entirely to Old Block,” Ezra Dane concedes, “but he deserves remembrance. He was a courageous pioneer. He loved and inspired his fellow men. He was the first truly Californian man of letters, and no one has described or interpreted the human elements of the Gold Rush so sympathetically as he. Moreover, he was a jolly good fellow if ever there was one, and as John Phoenix was forced to admit when they met, By Jove, he *did* have a big nose!”*

Pen-Knife Sketches, xx-xxii; Grass Valley *Union* and Sacramento *Union*, September 10, 1874.

The California Correspondence is here collected as it appeared in the *Free Trader* and the *True Delta*, with certain minor exceptions. Variations in typography, punctuation, and spelling have generally been silently normalized. Delano was a highly literate and well-read man, as his quotations and publications amply prove. In his published correspondence, however, he was undoubtedly the victim of editors' and pressmen's vagaries, which it has been the endeavor of the present editor to correct. But in cases of doubt, such as in the use of “lay” for “lie” and other

solecisms, the words have been left as originally printed, for unquestionably Old Block was no dude, and kept firmly in mind the value of the plain Americanisms to which his readers—especially those on the Illinois prairie—were accustomed.

1

I. St. Joseph, April 19, 1849.* GENTS OF THE *Free Trader*:—This is the first infliction of a deck passenger and you may wish it the last, but as the fault is your own, I shall offer no apology, and you must e'en be content to do as I am doing, "take it as it comes."

Published in the Ottawa (Illinois) *Free Trader*, May 11, 1849. This was a small-town weekly newspaper, Democratic by persuasion, owned and edited by the brothers William and Moses Osman. Founded in 1840, the paper lived until 1926. William Osman (1819-1909) was born in Pennsylvania, first became associated with the *Free Trader* as a printer in 1840, and owned it (sometimes solely and sometimes in part) from 1848 until his death. *Ottawa: Old and New, a Complete History of Ottawa, Illinois*, 1823-1914 (Ottawa, 1912-1914), 28. Delano's letters in the *Free Trader* and in the New Orleans *True Delta* were run under headlines conspicuously calling attention to their association with California.

You have "seen the Elephant"* and know the cost of obtaining a sight at his Trunkship. As for me, I have scarcely obtained a view of his shadow yet, but if "coming events cast their shadows before,"* in due time I hope to get in close proximity of his mammoth proportions.

"When a man is disappointed in anything he undertakes, when he has seen enough, when he gets sick and tired of any job he may have set himself about, he has 'seen the elephant.'" George W. Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Sante Fé Expedition* (Chicago, 1929; original ed., 1844), 138. William Osman had served in the Mexican War; this may be the experience to which Delano refers. *Ottawa: Old and New*, 28. Cf. p. 5.
Thomas Campbell, *Lochiel's Warning*.

The day I left Ottawa* was delightful overhead, but the soft soil of our beautiful prairies, hub-deep to the wagons, together with the pleasing antics of a baulky horse and the frequent opportunity of having my boots blacked with some of Nature's best—no thanks to 2 the porter—as we lightened our load by jumping out into the deep, deep mud, proved that all was not gold that glittered.* At evening we went on board the good steamer *Revolution* and the next morning left Peru on our golden voyage.

Thursday, April 5. *Across the Plains*, 1.
Cf. Shakespeare, Globe ed., *The Merchant of Venice*, II, vii, 65.

"Hung were the heavens in black,"* and ere long a *revolution* took place overhead. I have not the least doubt that the deluge was occasioned by the windows of heaven being opened. It appeared to me that the flood gates were open now, for it literally poured; and I should think that twenty days of such rain would be sufficient to drown all the rats—two-legged as well as four, in Ottawa. We had an agreeable company on board, however, a good captain and crew, and as it rained or poured only two days and nights of the four we were going down the river, I can't complain. I do not intend to give you a sketch of the scenery along the Illinois River, as it is too familiar to the most of your readers; but I was utterly astonished at the vast multitude and height of the Indian mounds from Beardstown quite to the mouth. I have often read of them but had never formed an adequate idea of their number. Every prominent bluff seemed covered and attest that a dense population of a race, now unknown, once covered this beautiful region, and whose only history is written in these hillocks that crown the summits of the bluffs or are scattered over our rich prairies.*

Cf. Shakespeare, *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, I, i, 1.
Artificial mounds are prevalent in Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Minnesota, Indiana, Mississippi, Florida, Virginia, and Kentucky. Whether they were built by the Indians or a previous culture group is not known. John H. Cornyn, "Mound Builders and Mounds," *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1948.

Monday morning* dawned upon St. Louis with a washing-day face, and we poor miserable bipeds, as usual, had to "stand from under" or take a ducking. The day was a busy one, however, for, as an excellent boat was advertised to leave for St. Joseph that evening, I was anxious to complete my outfit and ship my wagon on board of her. I therefore adopted the Sucker mode of tucking the ends of my nether garments into my boots, took an umbrella and in company with Mr. Fredenburg,* Mr. Thorn,* and some others of our Ottawa friends set out in search of rations. These we found advanced in price in consequence of so many calls for California; but by the hour of starting we were told that in consequence of the rain the *Embassy* could not complete her lading till the following day.

April 9.
Isaac H. Fredenburg (1815-1884), of Ottawa. More familiarly "Fred," he was one of the four "companions of my mess." *Across the Plains*, 1, 107. Born in Ulster County, New York, Fredenburg operated the first ferry at the

junction of the Fox and Illinois rivers in 1834. He went to California twice, but finally settled down as a business man and deputy sheriff at Ottawa. *Ottawa: Old and New*, 129.
Benjamin Kent Thorn (1829 or 1830-1905). He was born in New York State; in California he served for more than forty years as sheriff of Calaveras County, capturing many desperadoes, including the celebrated “Black Bart” (Charles C. Bolton). Sacramento *Union*, November 16, 1905.

3

There were large numbers of emigrants in the city, but not as many as I expected to find from previous accounts. Some of the boats went out with large loads, while others had more moderate ones; but there is no doubt but many thousands will attempt to cross the plains. I met acquaintances at every turn: in fact it seems that I met more than I knew—is that a bull?

On Tuesday evening, all being ready, we put out into the stream with three hearty cheers from over four hundred souls, which was returned with right good will by those on the shore, and the *Embassy* was plowing the “Father of Waters” loaded to the gunwale with passengers, whose vision rested on the golden heights of the Sierra Nevada or the sparkling dust in the Valley of the Sacramento. Besides our own half dozen souls from Ottawa there were companies from Tecumseh, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; Lynchburg, Virginia; Louisville, Kentucky; besides a right small sprinkle from all other places and no place in particular.

Feeling a little aristocratic, and not wishing to see the “elephant” too soon, I thought I would take a cabin passage.

“What is the fare to St. Joseph?” I asked the clerk.

“Eight dollars, sir,” was his reply.

“Can you show me a stateroom?”

“They are all taken—not a berth left; but we can give you a good comfortable mattress on the floor. You will be very, *very* comfortable!—In fact it's just as pleasant.”

“Hem! yes, no doubt, I think I'll try the deck. How much for a deck passage?”

“Three dollars, but it will be very unpleasant.”

“No matter, it will go to break in, and I may as well begin now,” and so I took a deck passage, and the difference in price I paid to insure my wagon and goods to St. Joseph.

And now a word as to the comforts of the cabin. It is so full that many cannot get even a mattress to sleep on, and the long tables have to be set five times in succession before all can eat, and the air is so confined that several have left it and begged to sleep in the wagons on deck.

The discomforts of the deck are pure air, a large roomy wagon with an excellent cover over it, plenty of buffalo skins and blankets to sleep on; in short, a little territory of our own which is respected by all, with a good chance to boil your own coffee at a public stove, and the privilege to eat when and how you please. It was a most fortunate hit for me this time, and I am now writing in my own wagon with as much ease and comfort as I could in your own office. I have repeatedly had the offer made me to swap berths, but I have good and sufficient reasons to be content with what I have.

The day of our leaving, one of the Dayton (Ohio) Company had his leg broken by a fall on the boat. The fracture was a bad one and 4 he was left at St. Louis by his companions. And another quite serious accident occurred before starting in the Virginia Company. A thoughtless greenhorn wishing to display his skill with a pistol, on the upper deck, discharged it through the deck into the cook room where the ball lodged in the shoulder of one of the boys belonging to the boat. The ball was cut out by a surgeon, and the skillful marksman had his passage money returned and was set on shore to follow on as best he could. It has perhaps served as a lesson to others, and the exhibition of pistols, bowie knives, and such innocent toys are not quite so common as before.

We entered the Missouri, twenty-five miles above St. Louis, some time after dark, and daylight found us taking in wood some miles above the mouth of the river. Now, then, came a serious question—who will make the coffee? Our first night had passed pleasantly, and all slept well upon

our buffalo couch; but a bracing atmosphere admonished us that we had stomachs which needed "wooding up" in order to keep the engine of life in full play.

"Give me the coffee pot," said Brown,* "I'll get some water."

Robert Brown, of Ottawa. He was one of the three young Ottawans whom Delano engaged to assist him on the overland journey and to repay him for his advances with one half the profit they would earn during the first year away from home. But upon arrival in California, Brown left Delano and never repaid him. *Across the Plains*, 1, 107. Cf. p. 32.

"I'll boil the coffee," says Fred.* "I'll see what chance there is at the stove."

Fredenburg.

"What's the matter, Brown?" I asked as he came back with an empty coffee pot.

"Well, there's no water to be had; that's settled."

"No water?"

"Not the first drop, unless I take river water, and that's so muddy nobody can use it."

"No place at the stove—the Dutch and French have monopolized the whole," says Fredenburg in a pet—"there ain't a chance to light a pipe."

I never wanted coffee so much in my life. I undertook to give up the use of tea and coffee about ten days ago, and drink cold water. I had an ague chill and fever the same day; so I concluded to defer the experiment till I got on the plains.

"Give me the coffee pot," says I, and I went down to the pump with visions of flowing coffee bowls long past and gone dancing before me. I seized the pump-handle desperately, filled my pot from the muddy stream, elbowed my way through the crowd of Europeans to the stove, and enquired of a mustachioed, bewhiskered item of mortality if he could " *parlez-vou Francais*?" " *Oui*, *Monsieur*." "Well, then, will you please to move your pan and give me a chance at the fire?" (Qu.—Did you ever read the story of the Irishman and the gridiron?) "Well," says I, "I can't, but move your dish

so that I can boil my coffee," and suiting the action to the word, I 5 gave it a jog that made him understand what I wanted; and my effrontery gained me a share in the stove and a capital cup of hot coffee. To be sure, the mud all settled to the bottom and left the "simon pure" at the top. Having "got the hang of the barn," as the boy did of the schoolhouse, we have had no trouble since.—
Did you ever have an appetite that would not be satisfied? O yes, you have been to Mexico, and know the effect of air upon your gastronomic cravings.* For two years past I have suffered much ill health, with loss of appetite, and especially for the last two months. But now, for the last four or five days, I am worse than a half-starved Indian. I've an appetite like an ant bear, and if it continues when I get among the Eutahs, you may get some feeling remarks about the exquisite flavor of a baked papoose or a roasted Indian. My health is decidedly improving.

Cf. p. 1.

While we were breakfasting, a rumor reached our ears that the cholera was in the cabin. It ran like wildfire through the boat. The cholera! Great heaven! And there were many anxious faces, while others took the matter calmly. Some doubted it to be genuine cholera and thought it simple cholera morbus. But the groans of the afflicted one proved his sufferings severe, be it what it might. He was a young man about twenty-three years of age, belonging to the Virginia company. He had been very imprudent in St. Louis in eating fruit—it is also said in the use of ardent spirits, and was taken with vomiting and cramps the evening that we left port. During the day of Wednesday, every indication showed the character of the disease, and a physician on board pronounced it genuine cholera. At night he appeared easier, and hopes were entertained of his recovery. But they were only illusive, for he expired about ten o'clock on Thursday morning.

Here was a melancholy beginning for the company. One of their number, a favorite too, one of high hopes, with many friends behind, was suddenly stricken from their midst, though in the full enjoyment of health but a few hours before, and was to become foods for worms in a strange land, far from those who loved and cherished him as their own. Yet he was not neglected. All was done that could be under the circumstances, and although he had no mother to smooth the pillow of his sufferings or weep over his distress, yet there was not a heart on that boat that did not yearn to do something for his comfort. A rough box was made instead of a coffin, of the only material that

could be had, and a little before night the boat lay up to the shore to give an opportunity to bury him. It was in a gorge, between two lofty hills, and a place was selected about midway of that on the right hand, beneath a cluster of trees on a bright green sward. Many and willing hands lent their aid in digging his grave, a procession was formed from the boat and proceeded to his last resting place with all the respect and solemnity 6 used in such occasions at home, and when the corpse was lowered into the grave, and, by the faint twilight, a friend read the Episcopal funeral service, although it was in the midst of a drizzling rain, every hat was removed simultaneously, and every heart seemed softened with respect for the deceased and reverence for God. How little can man foresee his own destiny! How little is the thread of life! The first use made of the spade that was taken to turn up the golden sands of California, was to bury one of their own companions amid the rocky bluffs of the Missouri.

In the midst of the succeeding night, the slumbering crowd were again awaked by an agonizing cry in the cabin, of *Heaven*, have mercy on me! Spare me, O God! They are coming! They are coming! Drive them off! Don't you see them bite me?" A miserable wretch was paying the penalty of intemperance and, in a fit of *delirium tremens*, fancied that snakes were crawling over him and grinning devils were coming to carry him off.

Our heavily laden boat is making slow progress against a strong current and a strong headwind, and our trip to St. Joseph promises to be about double the usual length of time. Friday morning developed the fact that we had some of the sporting gentry on board. One adventurer was fleeced of every farthing of his money at the card table, and two of the cabin passengers found their pockets cut by some scientific operator.

Finding our supplies of breadstuff too small for our long trip, our boys tried to replenish our larder at several little towns, but without success. When we reached the beautiful town of Boonville, I thought I would try my luck. When the boat touched the landing, I jumped off and made my way to a baker and laid in a good supply of eatables. As I was going on board, I met Brown, who exclaimed, with a joyful countenance,

“Well, I've had good luck this time. I've got ten loaves of bread, a host of rusk, and a lot of cake.”

Just then Smith,* a espying us, came up with an arm full.—“Won't we go it now, boys? See here! I've got a cartload.”

Ebenezer Smith, of Ottawa. He was another of the three whom Delano engaged. Despite special kindness, he too broke his contract in California. *Across the Plains*, 1, 30, 107. An Ebenezer Smith died at San Francisco, aged twenty, on May 24, 1851. San Francisco *Alta California*, May 30, 1851. Cf. pp. 4, 12, 32.

“The deuce,” says I, “so have I! Where's Fred? I'll warrant he's in the commissary's department too.”

Directly he came in with *supplies for St. Joseph*, and on taking inventory, we found that we had on hand forty loaves of bread, six dozen rusk, fifteen cards of gingerbread, besides sundry piles of nuts, apples, milk, and crackers to fill—a tolerable supply for five men for three days.

“Go it, boys, while you're young, but don't let the captain see it, or he'll charge for extra freight.”

7

Mr. Green's company,* including young Thorn, left St. Louis the day before we did. Mr. Fredenburg intended going up with them, but was accidentally left. I did not regret it, as it gave us the pleasure of his company, and his dry jokes help to destroy the tedium of our steamboat imprisonment. Smith, too, has varnished up his old stories, so that we contrive to pass the time very agreeably.

Jesse Green (1817-1907) was captain of a company from Dayton, Illinois. Born at Newark, Ohio, he became a prosperous miller and served several terms as justice of the peace and town supervisor at Dayton, where he died. *Ottawa: Old and New*, 2, 7, 108-109; *Past and Present of LaSalle County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1877), 581.

Monday evening, April 16, found us five miles below Independence landing, and the captain as well as passengers were anxious to get in that night. The river was full of snags and required the most careful running even by daylight; still the pilot thought he could carry us safely through. A furious storm of rain suddenly arose, our boat struck heavily twice against floating trees and

Capt. Baker would run no more risk. The boat was therefore run alongside an island, though with considerable difficulty, and we lay by till daylight, when we ran up to the landing.

The town of Independence lays three miles from the river; and the landing is only a small cluster of log houses, with two or three poor warehouses. A high limestone bluff runs from the river and is ascended by a difficult road about a quarter of a mile in length. At St. Louis we were told that an immense throng had congregated at Independence, five or six thousand, and that the landing was lined with wagons for a mile, so that it was difficult to find a passage through them. I counted six wagons at the landing and forty on the bluff belonging to different companies; and I was told by a gentleman, who was collecting the names of all the emigrants, that he had visited all the encampments, that within a circle of fifteen miles there were about 2,500 only at that time.* I will not hazard a guess now at the probable number who will attempt to emigrate, but I am convinced that it will be much less than was expected.*

The gentleman who gave this information was probably the unidentified correspondent of the St. Louis *Missouri Republican* who shuttled between Independence and St. Joseph gathering data on the Forty-Niners and who signed himself "California." St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, April 10—May 17, 1849.
Between twenty-five and thirty thousand people negotiated the California Trail in 1849, and as many more in 1850. John W. Caughey, *California* (New York, 1940), 296, 300.

Since leaving St. Louis the weather has been cold and a strong head wind has blown for eight days in succession, which has, perhaps, had a favorable effect on the health of our passengers; still our long trip has made us anxious to be free from the imprisonment of a steamboat.

We arrived at St. Joseph on Thursday evening, April 19.

Yours truly,

A. DELANO.

8

2. St. Joseph, April 21, 1849.*

DEAR *Free Trader* —From the mouth of the Missouri to this place the banks of the river are high and often precipitous and rocky, though the valley is sometimes two miles wide, and the water is constantly wearing away the soil of the bottoms, which are only a deposit of the stream at some former period. This makes the Missouri a muddy stream, resembling the water in a puddle after a shower; but after being allowed to settle a short time, the water is sweet and wholesome. A few miles above Independence, we pass the mouth of the Kansas, and on that side up to Council Bluffs, perhaps higher, is the Indian country, their claim to which is not yet extinguished by the government; and on their side you see no sign of civilization except at Fort Leavenworth, up as far as we have come, while the opposite or north side of the river is a fine farming country, well settled a short distance on the bluff. Fort Leavenworth stands upon the bank, perhaps an hundred rods from the river, and is like an oasis in the wilderness of prairie and cottonwood of the bottoms, with its neat barracks and surrounding brick buildings.

Free Trader, May 11, 1849.

The tedium of the steamboat was at length relieved by a view of the pretty and thrifty town of St. Joseph on the 19th, about four o'clock p.m., after a ten days' confinement, from St. Louis. It is situated upon a level plot, in a kind of amphitheatre, high ridges of broken prairie in the rear, with the river in front. It is the county seat of Buchanan County, has a fine spacious courthouse, two or three churches, a population of two thousand souls, twenty-one mercantile stores, mechanics in proportion, three steam flouring mills and a fourth under contract; three sawmills, and I was informed that fifty-four brick and ninety frame houses were erected last season. Twelve thousand hogs were slaughtered here last fall, and large quantities of bacon, hemp, and tobacco are brought in from the surrounding country. It is only five years since the town was surveyed and laid out, and it promises to be a place of much importance. It is already one of the prominent starting places for California and Oregon emigrants.

At St. Louis the emigrants have been egregiously imposed on by false representations as to the capability of furnishings outfits here. We were told that the number of emigrants was so great that supplies could not be obtained, scarcely at any price; that the citizens were sending down the river for provisions; that board was seven dollars a week at the hotels, &c. We were, therefore, induced

to lay in our bacon, a common article, at 5 3/4c. per pound; our flour at 9 $4.50 per bbl.; our bread at 5 and pay 30c. freight. We found on our arrival that the most beautiful bacon could be had and in *any quantity* at 4 to 5.; flour at $4 per bbl.; and board ranged from $2 to $4 per week at the hotels.

Cattle and mules, which had also been represented as being enormously high, can be had, the former at $45 to $55 per yoke and the latter from $50 to $70 each. Other supplies can be had on quite reasonable terms, and I should advise all who are coming *not to buy in St. Louis* but to complete their outfit here.

We found on our arrival that Mr. Green's company had decided to move up the river to Fort Kearny, ninety-six miles.* The season is backward, and it will probably be ten or fourteen days before the grass will allow the emigrants to start. By going to Fort Kearny they avoid crossing the Platte. A good military road extends through the interior; the streams are all bridged, and they are forty-five miles advanced on their journey, having the advantage of settlements so far. We found the first South Bend, Indiana, company here, but on the point of moving to Fort Kearny; and I think many men will adopt the same course.

The old Fort Kearny, begun by Major General (then Colonel) Stephen W. Kearny near the present site of Nebraska City, Nebraska, in 1846, and abandoned as a military post in 1848. See the article on Kearny in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. This place is not to be confused with the Fort Kearny on the Platte River which was called Fort Childs in 1849 and which is now marked by Kearney, Nebraska. *Across the Plains*, 17.

This will make a division in the main body, so that a much wider range will be had for our cattle. My cattle, with those of Mr. Cutting, are thirty miles in the country awaiting our orders. Mr. Cutting arrived yesterday and we have despatched Mr. Smith for our cattle, having determined to take the Fort Kearny route. We intend to leave here on Tuesday. We have to make the melancholy record of the death of Mr. Zeluff, a member of Mr. Green's company. He was taken with diarrhea and suffered it to run without attention six days, when vomiting and cramps set in and terminated his existence in a few hours. That company left here few hours before our arrival and went out five miles, when Mr. Zeluff died, and yesterday they stopped to bury him.

Messrs. Morril.* and Thorn, who are attached to our mess, went on with Mr. Fredenburg's wagon in the Dayton (Green's) company, and we expect to overtake them at the Fort, and then we intend to unite with Captain Tutt's company of South Bend, all old friends of mine.*

John Morrill (b. 1827), of Ottawa. Born at Concord, New Hampshire, he fought in the Mexican War and followed the gunsmith trade. He mined in California until 1853, when he returned to Ottawa to become a farmer and raise a family. Starting as a captain, he was brevetted brigadier general in the Civil War. *History of LaSalle County, Illinois* (2 vols., Chicago, 1886), II, 537.
Charles M. Tutt was “president” of a company of thirty men from South Bend, where Delano had conducted a general store. South Bend *Register*, February 22, 1849, as quoted in the South Bend *Tribune*, April 9, 1933; *Pen-Knife Sketches*, vii.

10

There are here, and in this vicinity, from two thousand to twenty-four hundred men, but not over three thousand at this time. Every steamboat brings its hundreds, and the next ten days may swell the number to five or six thousand.

I have ventured to predict ten thousand as the probable number who will attempt to cross the plains. It may exceed that calculation, but from present indications twenty and thirty thousand is far beyond the mark.*

But cf. p. 7.

In the motley crowd assembled at this point, you see every variety of costume and arrangements for traveling according to the taste and ability of the emigrants. It seems to be a general disposition to set fashion at defiance, or rather it is fashionable to be unfashionable. As a general custom, however, a check or woolen shirt, a Mexican broadbrim, small crown, white or brown wool hat, high boots reaching up on the knee, as uncomfortable as can be made *á la* seven league boots of Peter Schlemihl,* is the general character of your imaginary Croesus. Then others of more refined taste, who never dreamed perhaps of such exquisiteness at home, have cultivated a most precious pair of mustaches and whiskers, while others are trying to coax a pair to grow without success, *á la Baboonia*, and with a finer display of bowie knives and revolvers may hide the trembling of a coward heart. And these men, most of whom are strangers to hardships, are about launching

forth upon a sea of toil, where their habits must change and where all their comforts, aside from providential contingencies, depend upon themselves, their sagacity and ingenuity. They must drive and attend their own teams, repair all “breaks,” wash and mend their own clothes, bake their own cakes, cook their own meat, brown and boil their own coffee, in short, be teamster, carpenter, blacksmith, shoemaker, tailor, cook and bottle-washer all in one. Lawyers, physicians, counter-jumpers, ladies' man, dandy, think of this and weep, because the gold won't come to you, but is obstinately bent on having you go to it at the sacrifice of so much paste blacking, cologne water, gin slings, and mint juleps.

Hero of *Peter Schlemihls wunderbare Geschichte*, by Adelbert von Chamisso (1814). Peter gave up his shadow to a gray stranger for Fortunatus' purse, which endowed him with almost unlimited powers.

The women are all grinning at the thought of what a fist you will make on the bank of a puddle washing your own clothes without soap, or trying to *stop up* a hole in your shirt with a darning needle; and I fancy I hear my own better half, exclaiming half triumphantly, as I am sweating over the fire roasting coffee, with buffalo chips, after a rain, “It's good enough for you; you might have staid at home instead of going off on a wild goose expedition. You'll find 11 out that women are worth something after all.” Never mind, boys—“ *de gustibus non*,” &. For Gold the sailor plows the main; For Gold the farmer plows the land; For Gold we rag, tag, and bobtail, red shirts, Buckskin-pants,

and bowie-knife gentry plow sloughs, mudholes, Indian hunting grounds, Rocky Mountains, and Sierra Nevadas till we become shirtless members of the great unwashed and unshaved family, ready to fight for the last bit of a rat's tail for breakfast.

(That last line is rather long and doesn't rhyme exactly, but there may be truth in it if not poetry.)

Another way of recognizing a gold digger here is by seeing a six-foot biped, with his legs doubled up so they won't drag, astride of a mule about as large as a good-sized calf. I saw several today, and mean to make drawings as soon as I get leisure. I gave one of the most Quixotic three cheers and a hurrah; he put spurs to the animal and disappeared in the course of fifteen minutes behind a hill about ten rods distant.

Almost every boat reports one case of cholera, but in every instance it seems to have been brought on by imprudence or neglect; you may set this down as certain; and there is no case here among those who take proper care of themselves. We are advised that large numbers of foreigners are on their way to California, and I have heard but one determination expressed by our emigrants, and that is to assist our government to prevent foreigners of all nations from digging and carrying off the gold. They say, too, that if the government will do nothing, they will organize among themselves to prevent it. A militia formed from the emigrants will be an efficient force; for every man goes well armed and provided with ammunition, and will form no mean army of themselves with a proper organization.—Added to this, they are almost entirely composed of energetic, well-informed, resolute law-and-order men, who have characters at home and who cannot at once depart from the habits and mental training from childhood of a civilized and moral community. I have scarcely seen a rowdy or intoxicated man among the emigrants—not one in five hundred. It is emphatically the case here that you cannot judge the character of a man by his dress. The check shirt, the broadbrimmed hat, the quaint coat or wrapper, and the everlasting boots, reduce all to a level in appearance—the man of science, the scholar, the merchant, the lawyer, the farmer, the laborer, or the dandy.

It remains to be seen how well we shall sustain the sentiments that we have been educated in. I shall endeavor to keep you advised 12 of our movements from this place and after we get off of all mail routes; we shall embrace every opportunity of sending an account of our doings, with, perhaps a sprinkle of some of our “sayings.”

Yours truly,

A. DELANO.

3. English Grove, 38 miles below Fort Kearny Monday, April 30, 1849.*

DEAR *Free Trader* —Last Monday morning, about daybreak, we were awakenedby groans and sounds of distress at the side of our wagon. “Who is that?—what is the matter?” was a simultaneous

inquiry. “It is me—O!—I'm in such pain!—I'm very sick!” We instantly roused up and found Mr. Harris* was not with us and that he was the sufferer.

Free Trader, May 18, 1849. English Grove no longer appears on the map.
Matthew Harris, of Ottawa. He was one of the three youths whom Delano engaged to assist him on the journey.
Across the Plains, 1, 107. Cf. pp. 4, 6.

On getting out of the wagon, we found him leaning against a wheel in great agony of pain, occasionally retching convulsively; and, on learning that he had been up two or three times before, we became at once satisfied that the cholera had insinuated its poisonous fangs amongst us. I immediately gave him a large dose of laudanum, the only remedy or palliative at hand, and sent for a physician, who came within an hour and commenced an active course of medicine.

He grew worse, however, nothwithstanding all our efforts. Vomiting, purging, cramping became excessive—with cold limbs and hands, and cold sweat pouring from his brow; still we worked over him till noon, when we found the symptoms had changed. The vomiting, purging, and cramping ceased, his limbs became warm and the pain in the bowels was much less severe. In this condition 13 he remained for three hours, thinking, with us, that he was better. About four o'clock in the afternoon, while laying in comparative ease, he was taken with gasping for breath and in ten minutes he lay a corpse before us.

Such a sudden and unaccountable change overwhelmed us for a moment. We could scarcely believe him dead; yet it was palpable to our senses, and the stern reality bid us prepare for the last obsequies for the dead. We laid him out as well as our slender means would permit and kept watch till morning when, with heavy hearts, we dug his grave and, with none to help us in the last sad rite, we consigned him “to that bourn from which no traveler returns.”*

Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, i, 79-80.

Poor Harris! with high hopes he left home, and this was the end of them. He was a man of singularly honest and upright intentions, of great moral worth, simple in his habits, and sincere in his professions. A Christian, he lived as near to what he believed his duty as the weakness of human nature allowed him. We felt that one of our best men had been taken. This is the only case that I

am cognizant of where cholera has been fatal to a temperate man. He never drank ardent spirits as a beverage and was temperate in all his habits. My impression is that the state of the atmosphere was the cause. In the lower part of the town was one or two slaughter houses, around which were large quantities of pigs' feet, several dead cattle and hogs, which created an effluvia almost insufferable; and I cannot understand why the corporation of St. Joseph allows such abominable nuisances to exist when cholera is among them and so many hundreds of people are daily arriving.

With regard to general operations I can add but little to my former letter. The arrivals by steamboats are becoming less; some are already tired of the expedition and are offering their teams and outfit for sale, while others are moving off to different points; so that instead of increasing at St. Joseph the numbers are rather decreasing.

After repairing our wagon bows, which were damaged in St. Louis, my team, under Mr. Fredenburg's directions, started up the river on Wednesday, April 26, towards Fort Kearny, to join the Dayton Company, which had preceded us, while I remained behind to get letters and papers by the next mail. That night I received a touch of the elephant—a rub of the "shadow of coming events."* I began to grow cold, and, hang me, if fire would warm me. In about an hour and a half, I got warm, warmer, warmest; and now ice wouldn't cool me. I tried the effect of cold water—humph! I had by some means swallowed a steam engine and all the water I poured down was converted into vapour at once; and, like the insatiable leech, there was a cry of "give, give, give!" till I thought my boiler would burst and I should be blown to atoms. A regular chill and fever was on me. The next morning I "went it" on blue mass: not 14 high mass, but blue pill, and lay up to dry, thinking that by Friday I could go on.

Cf. Campbell, *Lochiel's Warning*.

Friday morning the sun rose pleasantly and I arose smiling, under the impression that we would shine in company that day. I fed my pony early (I suppose the sun had fed his before I was up), intending to start after breakfast.

After a cup of coffee the sun put his head into a cloud and I put mine bewteen two blankets with another chill, which ended with another heating-up operation. However, after noon I got off my bed and on my pony, determined to get away from the cologne of St. Joseph. I was so weak I could hardly sit on my horse, but the pure air revived me, and I gained strength every mile, and by the time I reached the pretty town of Savannah, fourteen miles, I felt quite comfortable.

On Saturday I overtook my team, and then commenced an active warfare against *internal combustion*.

By the way, I got no letters from home and have not received the least word from any of my friends since I left, and now, probably, shall not.

We have been traveling over a high rolling prairie for the last two days, with considerable settlements. We reached here yesterday at noon and learned that Mr. Green, instead of going to Fort Kearny to cross the river, had crossed eight miles south of us, and that the South Bend company had gone on to the Fort; so that this divides the two companies for the present. I have sent my wagon to join the Dayton company and am laying up here to give my cold chills “a lick” if they don't give me “Jesse.” You will perceive by my writing that I am not desperately sick and don't expect to be: I stop as a matter of precaution to attend to myself in season. I took cold the night poor Harris died in watching over him. The rest are all well.

The grass on the bottom is good, but it will not be fit to start on the plains under ten or fifteen days.

By the way, it is a singular fact, so far as my observation extends, that all those who have been sick either lived on the river or came up it, while those who came across the country have not been attacked by disease of any kind. I am now well enough to join my company, which I propose to do tomorrow, and shall then be in the Pottawatomie country.* I have an opportunity to forward this to St. Joseph tomorrow and shall embrace it. I think I shall be able to write you again before we leave. It is twelve miles to the nearest post office.

Now northeast Kansas, where a county is so named, after the Potawatomi Indians who were forcibly transported there in 1837-1838 from Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Irving McKee, “The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit,” *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, XIV, No. 1.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

15

4. Harney's Landing, May 2, 1849.*

DEAR *Free Trader* —I left my comfortable quarters, where I had stopped to recruit and dose off the chills, this morning and came here to join our company. They have been encamped on the opposite side of the river in Indian Territory several days, but as the grass is good out at least fifteen miles, they have broken up camp and have determined to move as far as grass will allow. I shall cross after dinner and overtake them. We shall then be beyond any regular public conveyance—shall have to depend entirely upon chance. I shall embrace any which may occur to continue my correspondence. I am happy to say that my health is re-established. I learn that all our company are well. We do not go to Fort Kearny, but strike for Grand Island on the Platte. And now commence our wanderings, and whether they will continue as long and be as varied as those of the children of Israel, remains to be seen. I fear, however, that one of their evil deeds will be in some measure imitated by us; that is, the worship of the “Golden Calf.” May we not forget, however, that there is a God in Israel. This is sixty miles above St. Joseph.

Free Trader, June 1, 1849. Harney's Landing, sixty miles up the Missouri River from St. Joseph, is not on present-day maps. It was apparently named after Major General (then Brigadier) William S. Harney, Indian-fighter in the Platte country. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

16

5. Lawson's Settlement, California, September 18, 1849. Sierra Nevada Mountains, September 13.*

DEAR MARY—We are now within three days of Lawson's Settlement, in the Valley of the Sacramento; and if a bird was ever rejoiced to escape its thraldom, I shall be much more so to get to the end of this long, weary, and vexatious journey. A man deserves to be well paid who makes his first overland journey to California, for he can form no idea of the many trials he may be subjected to. The fatigues of the journey—the hardships of traversing an almost barren wilderness of nearly two thousand miles, I care but little for; but it is the narrow-minded ribaldry—the ceaseless strife which is constantly marring the tranquility of such a crowd—a mass of men in which each individual acts independent of all the rest, caring for none but himself, which renders it almost insufferable.

Free Trader, November 23, 1849. The editor's superscription reads: “Through the kindness of Mrs. Delano we have been permitted to publish the following highly interesting letter from her husband, now in the gold mines.”

Mary Burt Delano (1808-1871) became Delano's wife at Aurora, New York, in 1830. They had two children, Fred and Harriet, born about 1833 and 1843 respectively. The family was reunited at Aurora in 1852 and, after Fred's death, at Grass Valley about 1857. Mrs. Delano was “universally esteemed as a most exemplary lady.” Sacramento *Union*, February 22-23, 1871;*Pen-Knife Sketches*, vii, 57-58; Mary Delano Fletcher, *op. cit*.

“Lawson's Settlement” was the ranch of Peter Lassen, famed Danish explorer of California, on the south side of Deer Creek at its junction with the Sacramento River. Lassen settled here in 1844 and three years later named the place Benton City (after Missouri's expansionist Senator) in the vain expectation that it would become a permanent metropolis as the terminus of the Lassen Trail. In 1849 it was the best-known point, next to Sutter's Fort, in interior California.*Illustrated History of*

Plumas, Lassen, and Sierra Counties (San Francisco, 1882), 332; Bancroft, *History of California*, IV, 708; VI, 16, 498.

We have reached this point without accident to ourselves or our cattle, a somewhat extraordinary thing considering what we have passed through, but it has been accomplished only by the utmost vigilance and care on our part. We have been nearly three weeks longer on the road than we expected or should have been, but for circumstances.* When we were going down the Humboldt River, a report began to be accredited among the emigrants that there was a new road that led to Feather River, or the Sacramento, or the somewhere, that it was an hundred miles nearer to the mines, a better route, no difficulty in crossing the mountains (Sierra Nevada), and plenty of grass and water all the way, and that we should not have to cross the barren desert of the Great Basin. We watched for days 17 for the turning-off place, and in the meantime various reports were circulated about the road, and we did not know what to believe. In fact nobody knew certain whether there was a road leading to California that way, though there was one to Oregon. In much doubt we finally came to the turning-off point and our company determined to take it anyhow, as there was forty-five miles of desert on the old road without grass or water; and a story became prevalent that when we got out ten miles on the new road, there was grass, in fifteen miles water and some grass, and after thirty-five miles there was good forage all the way. We took it—there was no grass for sixty-five miles and but one spring, a mile off the road, where water could be had for the cattle; in short, we were on the desert and drove the whole distance without feeding our cattle, and no water except at the commencement. Our train was the fourth that had taken the road, and I counted on the last thirty miles fifty oxen dead from exhaustion on the desert. Yet our cattle went through well. We then came to a large boiling spring which irrigated about twenty acres of land, and a little distance below the spring the water became cool enough for the cattle to drink. We lay here till 'most night and then moved to better and more grass seven miles beyond, where we lay over one day. There we had two twenty-mile stretches of desert to pass without grass or water, so that our *no* desert proved to be one hundred and five miles; yet we passed safely through and without loss, although many who followed us lost their cattle and had to abandon their wagons and pack through on foot. We now came to a tribe of very hostile Indians, like those we had been with on the Humboldt—

they are a thieving set; they would come near at nightfall and either steal mules, horses, or cattle, or shoot them with arrows so that they could not be taken along, and then come in and get them after the emigrants are gone. We keep strict guard and save ours. We passed five hundred miles among the robbers; in fact, we are only two days beyond them. Some desperate encounters have been had between them and the whites, when in search of cattle or mules; for they fight well cornered, but run if they can. Yet I have been in the mountains alone by day and by night, have slept alone when the wolves have come howling within two rods of me, and have met with no trouble whatever from either Indians, robbers, or wolves; still, it was a risk. One gets used to it, and I have had no more fears in traveling alone, miles from any camp, than if I had been on a public road at home. We have seen many things I cannot speak of now, but have noticed them in my journal. At last we went northward till we met a government train going to the Humboldt with supplies for troops going in, and from them we learned that we should find a road just opened across the mountains to California, but that our route would be about three hundred miles farther than the one by the old road. We passed through a *cañon* twenty-five 18 miles.* This is a chasm wide enough for the road, and sometimes has considerable grass and wild oats growing in it. The country around is barren and rugged, the mountains impassable for wagons; but here Providence has opened this strange pass with perpendicular rocks three or four hundred feet high on each side. It is a great curiosity. Before we reached the pass we crossed the dry bed of a lake which was twenty miles long and five miles wide. Where we crossed the mountains it was by no means difficult; we were only a little over an hour in going over, and the hill is not any harder than many I have crossed in Pennsylvania. On the other side we descended to the valley that led to Goose Lake, which was salt and soda, the shores being lined with carbonate of soda for miles. A few miles below this we struck Pit River, the longest and principal branch of the Sacramento. This we followed down through a fine valley for a hundred miles, passing a hill of pure carbonate of magnesia fifty feet high. This was another great curiosity, for all that is required is to take out large and beautiful blocks with perfect ease. On leaving Pit River we came into pine forests, some of the trees two hundred feet high; and we are now crossing the mountains a hundred miles from Lawson's on the Sacramento, where we expect to be in three days. In consequence of our lengthened route our provisions are very low, and for ten days we have had nothing but hard bread and coffee, except now and then getting a poor, lean piece

of beef, which some of the half-starved emigrants have killed. But my health is as good as it ever was, and I can endure any amount of fatigue. I have not slept in a tent for more than two months, and in these mountains the ice is a quarter of an inch thick every morning; I lay on the ground and stand it well. We still hear encouraging news from the mines, and have met some Oregon men on their way home. There is much distress among emigrants on the old road. The grass is gone, their provisions have failed, many cattle died; and on the forty-five-mile desert, I have learned that five hundred mules and oxen lay dead and the effluvia has made much sickness among the emigrants. Many with families of little children are suffering, and those behind on the Humboldt must suffer severely if not perish. The grass is now gone on either road and God only knows how the last trains can get along. Many will go to Salt Lake to winter, some to Oregon, and some cannot get to either place. Men on foot daily pass us who started with good outfits but have lost all and are now begging their way through, and all the wagons on this route have scarcely enough for themselves as it is. Some pass on mules, having left wagon and baggage, their mules being too weak to draw their loads, and yet it is worse on the old road. It may have been the best thing for us that we took this road, for, except the first sixty-five miles, we have not really suffered, and that we might have provided 19 against had we known of the desert, by taking along grass and water. I cannot tell you in a letter what I have seen or passed through; even a journal is too limited; yet what would look like hardship at home proves, on trial, to be no hardship after we get used to it. I have written you every chance, but there has been no sure one since I left Fort Laramie till Charles Fisher overtook us on the Humboldt. I wrote by him and entrusted him with my journal up to Fort Hall, as he was going direct to Sutter's and would mail them.* I am very anxious to hear from you; I have not heard a word from my friends since the day I left Ottawa. I shall write as often as possible, and shall not close this until I reach the settlements. We have not seen a house for four and a half months, and have passed through many scenes which I must leave to recount on my return. I have felt quite uneasy about you during the sickly season but hope to be assured of your health before long

Delano later revised this estimate of lost time to four weeks or more. *Across the Plains*, 109.
High Rock Canyon, Nevada.
Charles A. Fisher, of Ottawa, was given the first part of Delano's journal, covering May 22—July 17, but apparently the *Free Trader* never received it. The second part, however, July 18—September 16, was published

in that paper. *Free Trader*, February 29, 1850. Fisher was reported as having gone to the Yuba River mines. *Ibid*., December 7, 1849.

September 17.—At length I am in the settlements. We had arrived to within a little over fifty miles of Lawson's, and the road lay over barren mountains, and it was necessary for our train to lay over a day or two at the last grass, and I concluded to walk on. Taking a shirt and tying the ends together to make a knapsack, I shouldered it, together with my blanket, water-bottle and tin cup, and set out about two o'clock p.m. The road was rocky and bad all the way, with long hills to go up and down, and water only at long intervals, and then in deep *cañones* (ravines) a mile from the road. I walked twelve miles and came up with a Missouri camp with whom I was acquainted, and they invited me to spend the night with them. This was the last water for twenty-two miles. In the morning I started on, and at noon kindled a fire among the tall pines of a dense forest and made a cup of coffee with some of the water in my flask. I was now on an elevated ridge one hundred feet high and in many places only wide enough for a road. This continued for sixteen miles, and at four o'clock I reached a watering place and went a mile down a precipice to fill my bottle—a very laborious task—and then went on two miles. Here I met Colonel Watkins, of whom I have spoken in my journal and with whom I have traveled a great deal.* He insisted on my taking up quarters with him for the night, 20 but his train had not one drop of water. From that in my flask we made a cup of tea and we were soon sleeping soundly on the ground. I preferred sleeping near a camp, for this forest swarms with grizzly bears and large wolves and panthers, their tracks being very frequent in the road. In the morning we had a very little tea from the water left, though two of his men walked four miles after night and got a pailful. I then walked eight miles, where I went down a still more steep precipice to a creek, kindled a fire and made another good cup of coffee, which revived me very much. About two o'clock I reached the Sacramento Valley, and at five I came in sight of the first house, belonging to Colonel Davis, of Tennessee.* It seemed strange to see habits of civilization again, and I hardly knew what to say or do when I reached it. A mile below was Lawson's, and the plain was dotted with tents, wagons, and cattle of the emigrants and those going to the gold mines from below. My first thought was for something to eat; I bought a pound of the best beef I ever saw, a pound of sugar, a quarter pound of cheese, four biscuits, and a little salt, then went to cooking and fared sumptuously. Flour is selling here at $50 per 100; beef 35c. per lb.; sugar, 50c.; cheese, $1.50

per lb. I paid 10c. for two tablespoons full of salt. These things are much cheaper at Sutter's, now called Sacramento City; but here they sell at any price, as emigrants come in hungry and destitute of provisions. My train will be in tonight or in the morning, and I think my first move will be to go to the city to raise some provisions. As for the prospects of mining, all agree that it ranges from eight to a thousand dollars per day. If you get a good place, a few hours will yield hundreds, perhaps thousands, but after getting the hang of the barn you are sure of eight dollars. This is the lowest that I have heard. Of course at this time I can say but little about it, but in the course of three or four weeks shall know more. There are various ways of making money, and my team will be worth a great deal to me either to haul loads or for beef. The latter is said to be worth a dollar per pound in the mines. If I go to the city I shall write to you from there. You will direct all letters to me to Sacramento City, where, I am told, there is a post office. From what I can learn at this early date the prospects are very encouraging, and I do not doubt of doing my share. It has been very sickly in the Valley, but the season is about over and we have got in about the right time.

Joseph S. Watkins. After attending Washington and Lee University, 1804-1806, he acquired the title of “Colonel.” He served in the House of Burgesses for Goochland County, Virginia, 1820-1825 and 1826-1839, then migrated to Memphis, Tennessee, and Missouri. He was reported as residing in California in 1857; from there he went to Texas, where he was a farmer and a leader of the Democratic Party. Delano lauded Watkins' “prominent philanthropic goodness of heart.” *Across the Plains*, 33; San Francisco *Alta California*, April 27, 1857; *Catalogue of the Officers and Alumni of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia*, 1749-1888, p. 59; *Register of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1776-1918*.

Peter L. Davis (1798-1867) had a plot on the north side of Deer Creek, a mile east of Lassen's. Born at Asheville, North Carolina, he came to the Feather River via the Lassen Trail in October, 1848. Beginning in 1850, he resided successively in Santa Clara, San Joaquin, and Humboldt counties. Sacramento *Union*, June 26, 1867; San Francisco *Alta California*, July 1, 1867; *History of Santa Clara County* (San Francisco, 1881), 659; Bancroft, *History of California*, II, 776.

This is nothing but a trading post of two families, Lawson and Davis. They live in low, mean, mud houses of unburnt brick (*adobe*).

21

My health never was better, and my ambition to be making something is equally as good. I shall soon write you again and I hope to know more of the gold region. I have been unable while on the road to write to any of my friends, but shall now embrace my first leisure to do so.

God bless you. I am

Affectionately yours,

A. DELANO.

6. Sacramento City, Two miles from Sutter's Fort, September 30, 1849.

*

MESSRS. EDITORS—I have been here four days and am on the point of leaving for the Upper Sacramento. I have much information to write you at my first leisure. It has been with much difficulty that I have written at all, our labors have been so severe, and it has been done chiefly at our noon halts under the shade of our wagon. The Valley has been much misrepresented by writers with regard to beauty and fertility. I would not exchange a good farm on one of our rich prairies for the whole of it; and instead of the beautiful Italian sky, it is smoky and unserene. The grass is dry and parched, with nothing green but the leaves of the oaks.* But there is gold in the mountains and opportunities for making money beyond anything I ever saw. The mines for six hundred miles are yielding well, though it is a kind of lottery in finding rich leads. Many are discouraged at not finding it plenty enough to scrape up, and are disgusted and leaving for home; many have been sick, made so by imprudent exposure and living.—New mines are being discovered even up in the Cascade Mountains. I do not regret coming, and shall remain, for I can make something; so can anybody who will work. I hope you have received the other portions of my journal which have all been duly sent.* Letters and papers I wish directed to me at Sacramento City, as there is a post office here. One word to all: Let no man come here who will not be willing to work steadily. As near as I can learn, a kind of average is about one ounce per day, though I have seen many who have not made more than five to ten dollars, while many have made and are making hundreds—thousands—in a few hours. You may dig a week and do little or nothing, and this discourages many, and they leave disgusted; but all say the wheel will 22 turn, keep digging. I shall be gone above about a month and in the time will try to give you a true and impartial statement of things as

they are without any poetry. The South Bend and Hennepin* companies are all in safe, and I have met several old friends who emigrated to Oregon some years before. Our company has separated; most of them gone to the Yuba mines, some to the Sacramento, and so on.

Free Trader, February 2, 1850.
This disparaging view of California is repeated in succeeding letters. But in 1852 Delano frankly confessed his error. Cf. p. 142.
Cf. p. 19.
South Bend, Indiana, and Hennepin, Illinois.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

7. Upper Diggings, Feather River, October 12, 1849.*

DEAR SIR—I have tried a long time to write you, but, since crossing the Missouri River, either sickness, extreme fatigue, or constant labor have totally prevented me. I have scarcely been able to write to my own family; and I have been compelled to make my journal, hastily written, subserve the place of correspondence to my most intimate friends, to whom I hoped and intended to have written frequently. You can form no idea of the labor, fatigue, trials and patience of an overland journey to this country. While traveling along the Platte for hundreds of miles, cold and rainy weather benumb your fingers while pitching tents, guarding cattle, preparing meals, gathering fuel so scantily distributed, and a thousand *et ceteras* blunt your faculties; and when the hour of quiet arrives at dark, you sink on your hard couch exhausted. It is the same when you reach the burning sand after passing the Platte; and, in addition to this, while traveling down the Humboldt (or Mary's River) the utmost vigilance is required to keep marauding bands of Indians from stealing or maiming your cattle; and you become wearied and worn out, so that if you lay over a day, you cannot collect sufficient energy scarcely to wash a shirt or mend your ragged and dilapidated garments. Any man who makes a trip by land to California deserves to find a fortune. The most of my writing has been done at our noon halts, often in the burning sun, for the little shade afforded by the 23 wagon would be occupied by the wearied men. But we have got safely through without

losing or laming any of our cattle, a somewhat unusual circumstance, and no serious mishap occured except running short of provisions and living about three weeks on hard, dry bread and coffee. My journal, published in the *Free Trader*,* will give you a general outline of our daily marches and adventures by the way; so I will not speak of them here. We made two grand errors: first, in taking the Nemaha Cut-off,* which put us back eight or ten days; and next, leaving the Mary's River and taking the Oregon and California Trail,* by which we lost three weeks' time in getting in, and on account of which we ran short of provisions and had to pass four hundred miles through hostile Indians that kept us on the lookout day and night. The Valley of the Sacramento, instead of being such a delightful region with its perennial spring, its blooming flowers, and clear sky, we found to be parched with drought, the grass dried to a crisp, the earth filled with wide cracks from the effects of a scorching sun and months without rain; indeed I have seen no rain from the 1st day of July to the 9th day of October, and there was nothing green for over a hundred miles that I have traveled except the oak and willow that line the banks of the streams. The atmosphere has been so smoky that I could rarely see the high mountains on either side of the Valley from the road, though only a few miles distant; while the nights have been uncomfortably cold (without frost), the days often burning hot. The soil in the immediate neighborhood of streams is no doubt good—equal to, though not better than, our prairies; but only one crop can be raised in a year on account of the drought. No doubt a change appears in the spring. During the rainy season all the low grounds are overflowed, while the deep soil, where it is more elevated, becomes so muddy that all communication ceases by teams and often for horses. It begins to rain in November usually, sometimes before, but business can be carried on till Christmas or the 1st of January, and during the month of February it is generally too wet to do outdoor work. Spring opens in March. Winter crops are put in the ground in October or November, and they mature before the extreme heat of summer comes on. But California is not destined to be an agricultural country so long as the mines are productive. The high price of labor will make the cost of grain much higher than it can be supplied from the States, and breadstuffs will continue to be imported probably for many years. But I suppose you desire to hear particularly about the gold region and the chances of getting gold. The result of my short residence here is this, and I think I am not far out of the way: Gold exists

no doubt in large quantities in the mountains and 24 is washed down into the rivers and creeks by the annual floods. New discoveries are being made all the while, but it is not every man who comes here that will return rich. It is a kind of lottery. All are making some, and many are making fortunes, probably as many as ever. In following the streams, the bars and low places near the river are searched where the slate rock comes to or near the surface. The rock catches the flakes in its crevices as it is washed down; so that you will perceive at once that in some places there will be more than in others, while in some there will be none. Where you think it may be, you take off the top soil, stones, and sand or fine gravel, and scoop up all the sand and dirt near the rock and in the crevices; this you wash, and a few pans full will show whether there is gold there or not. The gold sinks to the bottom, being heavier than gravel or sand. Sometimes a new beginner may work a week and not pay his board; but he must learn the trade of washing and judging where it may lay, and he is sure to get something. Many get discouraged and go to other mines, while others work for weeks and make only five or ten dollars a day, and others strike a good lead and take out several thousand dollars in a few days. On this river many wing-dams have been made and in all cases, so far, have yielded a rich return. Four men may make a dam in one to two weeks and with the cradle and pan wash out large amounts. The stories you generally hear at home are of the lucky ones; those who have worked for weeks and have only cleared a small sum are not reported, and these are many. They become discouraged at one place and go to some other, where the same thing occurs, or they may strike a rich lead and do well, while others, coming to the mines that have just been abandoned, may do equally well. One day a man got $50, the next, perhaps, nothing; and so it goes. There seems, then, to be but one way to work in the mines, and that is to stick to it till your turn and time comes, and be not discouraged because you are getting nothing and the man within three feet of you is taking out $100 per day. The work is not more laborious than digging at home, about the same; and the man who can dig there all day can do the same here, and men unused to it must become inured to it. Wages paid in these mines for washing is from $8 to $10 per day—$8 and $10 and found—at $12 the man finds himself. Board in the mines $3 to $4 per day, which leaves about $8 clear. I think the price of labor may decline some when the whole emigration gets in, though it will always be high. Hauling provisions and teaming generally has paid more than well. Early in the season a man could get $800 to take 3,000 lbs. to the mines; but

prices have been reduced now to $20 to $30 per 100 lbs. Last spring cattle were very high, $2,000 being offered for three yoke and a wagon and refused, very properly too, for two loads would pay it. Now, however, they are cheaper: oxen sell for from $40 to $80 per yoke, and a good wagon $80 to $100. 25 This change is produced by the number driven in from the States. Mules are in demand at from $125 to $200, and some even $300. I could tell you of men who are taking out from $500 to $1,000 per day, but I could also tell you of men who have labored three months in the mines and have made but little over expenses. There are other ways of making money here besides digging gold: laboring men do well; a man with a good team has a good capital to work on; and mechanics, especially carpenters, do well. The climate, I think, is unhealthy for northern men. There has been much sickness, not only in the mines, but in the country generally; dysentery, blood flux, ague and chill-fever are plenty. These yield readily to proper remedies if taken in season, much the same as in Illinois.—This is about the state of things as they now stand. In the city (Sacramento, at Sutter's Fort) speculation has become the order of the day; many men have realized fortunes in a few weeks, but that time is passed, for lots have run up far above their value. Lots which sold four months ago for $200 are now held at $10,000. One hotel rents for $1,500 per month, another $1,000; one eating and drinking establishment for $80, and so on. When the rainy season comes on, nearly all the town will be inundated, and they will have to move off towards the Fort till spring. Lots will then fall, I think. In the city the buildings are chiefly made of cloth, so that they can easily be taken down and replaced in the spring. Provisions there are low, all things considered, and they sell in the mines at about 200 per cent. profit, though the advance varies according to the distance and the facilities of getting to the mines. Where I am teams nor mules can go any farther up, and men are at work about ten miles above, but they have to pack their provisions over rocks and passes where no road can be made. The gold found here is very pure; it exists in fine scales, but higher up it is coarser. The dry diggings have not been worked recently, but will be this winter as soon as there is water enough in the ravines to wash with. To those who wish to come I would recommend the route by the Isthmus or around the Cape, for, disagreeable as it may be, they will suffer less than by an overland trip; but whoever comes, let him not think of returning in less than two years, for it will take that time to bring matters around right. I have made something and am getting matters in a train to make more, I hope.

Free Trader, February 2, 1850. The superscription reads: “The following letter from Mr. Delano was addressed to Sheriff Hurlbut, of this place, through whose politeness we are permitted to publish it.” Henry Hurlbut was sheriff of La Salle County, 1846-1851.*Ottawa: Old and New*, 12.

This letter was probably written at Dawlytown, a camp at the lower end of Bidwell Bar on the South Fork of the Feather, where Delano had opened a store with F. C. Pomeroy on October 10th.*Across the Plains*, 109, 112; Phil T. Hanna, “Dawlytown,” *Dictionary of California Land Names* (Los Angeles, 1946).

Cf. p. 19.
A name apparently ironically applied to the route followed by the party from the Missouri to the Platte. *Across the Plains*, 15-16.
I.e., the Lassen Trail.

A. DELANO.

P.S.—October 23.* —I came down from the mines for a new supply of provisions today. I find them fifty per cent. higher than when I was here before.

This postscript was probably written at Sacramento. *Across the Plains*, 112-119.

8. Valley of the Sacramento, November 19, 1849.*

DEAR *FREE TRADER*:—I take the first leisur moment that I have had since my arrival in this Paradise of California to redeem the promise I made of giving you what I know to be facts of this much-praised country and of the charming Valley of the Sacramento, and the leisure which I now enjoy is forced upon me by the rains and the utter impossibility of operating during the autumn. We had been led to believe that on reaching the Valley we should find a delightful climate, green with flowers and ever-blooming herbage, a luxuriant soil unsurpassed by any in the world. It was the 16th of September when I first set foot upon the Sacramento Valley. The sun was burning hot, the grass was dry and crisp, with no vegetation except upon the immediate banks of the stream, where the scrubby oaks still retained their verdure from the effects of the water which the thirsty soil soaked up, and the whole Valley looked as dry and vegetation as dead to all intents and purposes

as you ever saw it in the States upon the approach of winter or a long continued drought. For miles in many places there were large and deep cracks in the earth produced by the glowing sun, and we found no water along the road 27 often for fifteen and twenty miles when we came to a creek or river, except now and then a muddy pond hole so brackish as to be used only from absolute necessity. The Valley may be from thirty to forty miles wide in many places, but not always. The road down the Valley from Lawson's to Sacramento City approaches occasionally within ten to fifteen miles of the California (and Gold) mountains, but the atmosphere was so hazy that I could not distinguish their outline and often could not see them at all even in that short distance, and but once since I have been in the Valley—the 13th of November, has it been clear enough to see the Coast Range and both sides of the Valley distinctly. Whether this is always the case or not I do not pretend to know; I simply state the case as I saw it this fall. In passing ranchos and on my arrival at the city, I saw more sickness from fever and chill and flux than I ever saw before, and Mr. Bryant in speaking of the salubrity of the climate, says that dead cattle emit no offensive smell but dry up.* This is not so; animal matter decays as soon and emits as offensive an effluvia here as at home though no dew falls during the long dry season, so that sleeping outdoors is not unpleasant. The days are excessively warm and the nights become so cool towards morning that extra clothing is necessary for comfort. We supposed that the labor of crossing the plains would have fitted emigrants to bear the climate better than those who came by sea. But so far as my observation goes, there was no difference. All suffered sickness alike, and one was as likely to be taken down as another. And thousands were sick, and still are. Indian corn and potatoes do not thrive well, though they can be raised, and but one crop of wheat can be raised in a year.

Free Trader, March 30, 1850. This letter must have been written at Mud Hill, near Oroville, where Delano was weather-bound most of November. *Across the Plains*, 113-119.
Edwin Bryant (1805-1869) was the author of a very popular guidebook entitled *What I Saw in California—Being a Journal of a Tour of the Emigrant Route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and through California, in* 1846 *and* '47 (Philadelphia, 1848). The book was reprinted many times. One passage reads: “The atmosphere is so pure and preservative along the coast, that I never saw putrified flesh; although I have seen, in midsummer, dead carcasses lying exposed to the sun and weather for months, they emitted no offensive smell. There is but little disease in the country arising from the climate” (Chap. XXXVIII). In later letters Delano again attacks these and other views, mainly of California's scenery and agricultural future. Cf. Chap. XXIX. For Bryant's career, see *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (7 vols., New York, 1887-1900).

If there is rain, enough wheat will grow without irrigation; otherwise the land must be watered. To sum it all up, it is no agricultural country, it will not compare with the western prairie, and its chief value consists in the mines. The mountains are a barren waste which cannot be cultivated, and the Valley is an arid plain unfit for an agriculturalist to spend his time and labor upon. The ranchos are from ten to twenty miles apart. These are rude houses without floors, built of sun-dried brick, owned by men either squatting on the land or by those holding a grant from the Mexican governors of California, a dubious title which the U. S. Government may or may not recognize. These men claim from ten to one hundred *leagues* of 28 land, making a landed aristocracy which must control the country if their claim is recognized by our Government, and which will eventually produce much disturbance unless the U. S. buy them out. Should their claims not be acknowledged, the titles to the lots sold in San Francisco, Sacramento City and other places are good for nothing and can be held only by pre-emption, and this will open a wide door for litigation and trouble.* Near each ranch is generally a village of Indians.* —These are for the most part perfectly naked at all seasons of the year, the women having only a small tuft of grass before them, though those employed about the house are dressed " *a la Americain*," but I have seen scores of men lounging around a ranch as naked as they were born, where were several women of the household. A more filthy and disgusting class of human beings you cannot well conceive. They are dark-skinned, nearly as dark as a negro, covered with dust, living upon acorns, wild fruit and fish. They have nothing of the noble bearing of the Indians east of the Rocky Mountains, and they seem to be only a few degrees removed from brutes. Their dwellings resemble almost exactly large coal pits where wood is charred; a hole is dug in the ground, a circular framework is built, and this is covered with dirt six or eight feet high, with a small hole at the base to creep in and out of, and another at the top to let out the smoke. You will always see numbers of men sitting on the tops of their hives sunning themselves, while the squaws are generally engaged in preparing their acorn flour or in weaving baskets and pans, in which they are very ingenious. They make them perfectly watertight. Their acorns are dried, then pounded fine and mixed with some kind of berries, making a kind of bread which is by no means unpalatable, but it requires a man who has the courage to eat a rattlesnake to taste it. In fact, a man must cross the plains before he can summon resolution to eat it, especially after seeing them prepare it. The men

are very expert in spearing salmon, of which there is the finest here I ever saw, and very abundant. They are now frequently employed in the mines for a mere trifle, and such generally contrive to get a shirt, and a few get rich enough to buy a coat and pantaloons, but since the rains have set in I have seen hundreds of them wading the streams for fish or traveling on the plain naked, and paying no more regard to the wet chilly storm than dumb beasts. In the Valley they are now inoffensive, as the number of whites overawe them, but in the mountains they sometimes give the miners trouble and some collisions have taken place. Those in the 29 mountains are treacherous and unsafe, and will be until they become acquainted with the power and strength of their Anglo-Saxon neighbors. —And now for the real value of California, the staple commodity which has made it an El Dorado, and the only thing which renders it of consequence in a commercial point of view and which has induced so many to leave home and friends, to encounter hardships, sickness and privation, and finally to lay their bones in the lonely dells or high mountain tops of this volcanic and sunburned country, so far from home and kindred—Gold is the talisman. Gold is the lamp of Aladdin. Gold is the magic wand. And it is here, but howfew, alas! of that mighty throng that passed the plains will have their dreams of wealth realized. Many have made fortunes, many are still doing so, but you do not hear of those who do not get enough to pay their board, of those whom disease has prostrated in the mines before they have dug an ounce, and the difficulties to be encountered before it can be obtained.

Delano anticipates here the Sacramento Squatter Riots of 1850, involving the proponents and opponents of Sutter's Mexican land title and resulting in considerable bloodshed. In general, the validity of Mexican titles was maintained. Sacramento *Transcript*, August 15-16, 1850; Josiah Royce, “The Squatter Riots of '50 in Sacramento,” *Overland Monthly*, VI (Second Series), No. 33 (September, 1885), 226-246.
Maidu Indians. A. L. Koeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, 1925), 391-4419

I shall tell you the whole story as I see it, and then let those come who wish to. I will give no advice. I will neither discourage nor advise anyone to come. They may come and get rich, or they may come and remain poor, and they may die.

The gold appears to lay in the mountains in a certain range running north and south. Fine gold is found at the foot of the mountains, in the streams and ravines, being washed by the floods from higher points. At about the same range and depth of ravines from twenty to thirty miles from the

Valley coarse gold or lumps are found, and although everbody run to the rivers and go up as high as they can, the fact seems to have been generally overlooked that it exists in the same range where the depth of ravines are the same.

I believe a man may go anywhere up such a ravine and find gold in lumps, and this range extends for hundred of miles, and probably through Oregon and on into Asia. Much is said of gold diggings on Trinity River, which heads in Klamath Lake and flows among the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific.* This has been discovered within the last season, and I do not doubt but rich mines exist there, for the upheaval of those mountains are higher and the dislocation of strata greater than in the California mountains; so that in the range the gold will be easily come at, and more ravines exist to work in.

It has been found impossible hitherto to penetrate very high up the mountains from the difficulty of getting provisions up, and strong parties are more necessary on account of the treacherous savages who inhabit the hills.

Delano is in error her; the Trinity River rises in the Scott Mountains, Trinity County.

But passes are being found and obstacles overcome, and men are working their way gradually up, and will do so until they finally succeed in getting to the highest point of the golden range. As to 30 the amount of gold which exists in the country, it has not perhaps been much exaggerated. There is great quantities, but the difficulty of obtaining it has not been properly understood at home, nor the trials a man suffers in getting it. There are always exceptions. Some men seem “born with a golden spoon in their mouths,” but the great bulk of mankind have to labor for it.—A man cannot dig gold without something to eat, nor can he labor unless he has health and strength.

Those who have been here long enough to get well prepared can do much better than those recently arrived. You hear of men picking out lumps of gold from the crevices of the rocks as if all they had to do was to stoop down and dig it out. These rocks by the way are in the beds of the streams, when at high water bars are formed over them often five or six feet. Before you get to the rocks and crevices you have to remove the stones, often heavy rocks, gravel and dirt, to the whole depth, and

then scoop out the dirt lodged in the crevice, and under this dirt and sand or mixed with it lays the gold—sometimes you may spend a day or two in getting down to the rock and find no gold there; yet you may make a good strike and find thousands. Bars are not always so deep, and gold is found too during low water, when the rock is exposed, but there is always dirt in the crevice which covers the gold, and to obtain this it is frequently necessary to pry up large masses with a bar or lever and then gather the dust and wash it.

But work is work, at home as well as here, and it is not the labor which is so exceptionable, for all do, or at least should expect to labor hard to obtain “the dust.” There are difficulties of another kind to encounter which are insurmountable.—From July to October the weather is too hot, especially in the mountain gorges where the “winds do not blow” and where no rain falls to cool the feverish air, to work, and the nights are often cold, giving two extremes in twenty-four hours. Chills often are the consequence to those who attempt to brave the climate. From November—at least from the 1st of December till April—the continued rains and floods make it impossible for men to labor but little of the time without entailing disease upon them, and when a man gets sick in the mines, even if he has a physician and medicine, the food he gets is not of the kind required, and prices of attendance and of necessaries are so high that a month's sickness sweeps off a “big pile.” Physicians' charges are one ounce per visit. Nurses charge from ten dollars up to any price. As miners often change their location, a great variety of provisions cannot be carried, and the essential and most convenient ones are pork, flour and salt. This diet, long continued, produces scurvy, of which I have known and seen many instances. These are the general difficulties, and I now proceed to facts respecting those who have come in the present season. A few had provisions enough 31 left to go at once into the mines on their arrival, but they were very few. Some of these have done well, while many have done but little. But by far the greatest part were obliged to get provisions before they could make a step towards the mines. The seasons was somewhat advanced before they arrived; many were without money and had to go to work to earn enough before they could buy provisions. Others rushed to the mines and went to work without experience, depending on their luck for subsistence. Without tents, many without blankets to shield them from the cold night air, living on pork and hard bread, with a burning sun by day, hundreds were stricken down by disease; many died, while others were

unfitted for work for the rest of the season. On my arrival at the mines there was a heavy rain of twelve hours, and I know of four men who lay out in it, all of whom were too sick with chills and flux to sit up. I let my own blanket and buffalo skin go to cover one man from the storm within two hours after my arrival. His bones now lay on the mountains's side where the cold storm will trouble him no more. I know of companies of ten to fifteen men who crossed the plains, everyone of whom were down sick at once, with no one to wait on them. Some recovered and some died.

And there were many men who were taken sick on their arrival, before they could dig an ounce. Four men passed my shanty, where I am now writing, yesterday, who were in that condition, and they are trying to get to the Coast, hoping to find a change of climate there.

My friend Chipman has been unfortunate.* I have just learned that he was taken with the scurvy on the road and now hobbles about on crutches. He has been within eight miles of me a month, and an accident only made us acquainted with our proximity. I shall see him tomorrow and minister all in my power to his wants. And those who went to the city for supplies—about the time of their return and before many got to their intended diggings, the rainy season set in; so that those who could have went to work can do but little till next spring—say June, when they must start off for more provisions; yet proper arrangements with their companies will enable them to do something, however. My own adventures will give you an inkling of some of a miner's troubles, which I will give you directly, and hundreds are at this moment much worse off than I am.

Otherwise unidentified, he came from Ottawa and died at Long's Bar in December, 1849. *Across the Plains*, 118.

There has been much sickness, not only in the mines but through the Valley generally, and a good deal of suffering—I have seen it and could fill sheets with individual cases. If there is anything like getting acclimated to the country, the emigrants are going it with a rush, Mr. Bryant to the contrary notwithstanding. Hundreds are 32 leaving the mines on account of the scarcity of provisions. The rainy season has set in, and there are not provisions enough in these mines for those at work; of those who leave (and scores pass by my shanty daily) many expect to support themselves by labor in the city, but at this season business is suspended there, and they will find nothing to do at any price, and I do not believe that there are tents and houses enough to contain the throng that are

rushing in. If a man has gold enough to support him and a tent, it may do to go to the city, but if he has neither he may die of want, for there are so many cases that common charity cannot relieve them. Yet, strange enough, it is the best country to make money in I ever saw, and a man who can and will work is pretty sure of congressman's wages, at least during the season of labor, which will be after the rains and floods are over. The rains have played the deuce with the calculations of a good many. They had been at work in the mines, some successfully, and having got enough to purchase supplies, dispatched a team after them. The rains have come on, and twenty-four hours have made the roads so bad in this beautiful and charming Valley that they are either fast in the mud on the Valley plain, wealth-bound on the bank of some stream or slough, or trying to count the stars amid the fogs and clouds of the first hill. The latter is my case precisely.—I have not yet found out exactly how many stars there are in the Milky Way, but I know within a few feet how deep the mud is between me and my camp at Bidwell Bar,* only ten miles distant. Well, I lent my yoke and chains today to a man to pull an ox out of the mud that got mired fast, although he was driving his cattle unyoked before him, and this is on a side hill of the mountain. You know I came here to make money. On my arrival at Lawson's, the two men who had engaged to work a year for me that I brought through, left me *as a matter of course*,* and I took charge of my own team. On reaching the city, I took a load of provisions and started off for some place, not knowing exactly where, but to be governed by circumstances. The third day I lost one of my best oxen—strayed and got lost myself in hunting for him in a tangled morass where the brush, pea and grape vines were so thick as to make it almost impossible to get through.

Named after John Bidwell (1819-1900), who first discovered gold on the Feather River, in 1848. A native of Chautauqua, New York, he accompanied the first emigrant train to go overland from the Missouri to California (1841). He was conspicuous thereafter as soldier, landowner, and congressman. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Robert Brown and Ebenezer Smith. Cf. pp. 4, 6.

I got out, however, after a half day's hard labor, but did not find my ox and was compelled to buy another. Circumstances directed me to the Feather River mines, and I cleared six hundred dollars in two weeks on my load, and started for the city about the 20th of October for a recruit. No accident occurred in going down, but the 33 day before reaching the Yuba the 3rd of November, the rains

commenced, although the old settlers assured us that we would have no trouble from rains till about Christmas. It poured down steadily for twenty-four hours and then held up. We drove five miles to the Yuba, where we had to lay up, as there was no grass nor water for the next twelve miles—too long a drive for the afternoon. The next morning we started out (there being three wagons in company) and I, being acquainted with the ford, took the lead. I observed that the river was swollen, but still thought it fordable and drove in. The opposite landing was only wide enough for a wagon to go up the bank, and I noticed my leaders were giving ground, and I jumped into the river to keep them up, but I found the current so strong that I was glad to get back on the wagon. As the water went deeper the current was stronger, and I soon saw my cattle could not stem it and were now at least two rods below the landing, unable to gain an inch upstream, and when within three rods of the shore they turned down the stream. I stopped them and jumped in to keep them towards the bank at least, but now I could not stand, and the current whirled me away like a shaving. I caught hold of my leader's horn as I was passing him and drew myself back to the wagon. I reflected that all *my capital* was there and that it was of the first moment to save my cattle.

No aid could be given me by my friends on shore, as the current would sweep them away, and they stood there helpless, expecting to see me go to *Davy Jones'* bag and baggage, every instant. I got out between the wheel cattle and, with the utmost labor, finally succeeded in getting the chain unhooked in about half an hour. The cattle started for the back shore, and I started for the wagon, but I was whirled away again with no more consideration by the foaming waters than if I had not been a teamster. But I caught hold of one of my oxen's tail and in this inglorious manner was tailed out, so chilled by the cold mountain stream that I could scarcely stand. Towards noon I went up to a ranch nearby to see if I could get a horse to ride in to my wagon, when a fiery young fellow swore he could get my wagon out or draw it to h—1. “Well, my fine fellow, if you will do it I will give you ten dollars and risk the wagon's going to the d—1.” He took three yoke of strong cattle and a horse—drove down to the river, when his courage evaporated entirely and he dared not even ride in. I then took his horse and rode in myself, and availing myself of the aid of a strong company that had just arrived, I took one end of a rope, while they held to the other; landing into my wagon and sending my horse ashore, I contrived to fasten the rope to the wagon tongue, when

the men hauled it to the shore safe and sound. With much labor I cut a path through the thicket of willows which line the bank, dug the bank down, unloaded my wagon, and secured my load, just as a second edition of the first 34 rain commenced, when I retreated to my wagon, where I spent a delicious night with the river foaming under me and the heavens "hung with black,"* though I was this side up and kept dry, all but my wet clothes. The next morning the river was lower (as there had been no rain during the previous day) and the other wagons passed safely over, and hitching five yoke of cattle to my wagon tongue, it was drawn out and we soon started off. But now it rained and we found the rich soil of this charming Valley so *unctuous* that it was dark before we reached our campground, our cattle completely exhausted, ourselves completely soaked, and our song of "Susanna, don't you cry,"* washed out of our memories by the trouble of getting our fires lighted and of cooking our suppers in the rain—in fact, we "just took a cold bite and went right to bed."

Shakespeare, *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, I, i. 1.
Stephen C. Foster, *Oh! Susanna*, one of the songs most popular with the Forty-Niners.

The next morning dawned with outpourings upon us, and for my especial comfort I was violently seized with bloody flux, brought on, probably, by extreme exposure. We lay there six days, during which it rained incessantly. I found my comfort in two doses of calomel and about half a ton of opium (or less) which straightened my internal relations, and the good and kind care of my companions, Messrs. Billinghurst, of Chicago, and Erholtz Holland of New Lisbon, Ohio, brought me to my feet. They stuck to me like brothers, and their nursing probably went as far as the medicine to make me whole again—and we stick together yet in the mud on the mountainside, and we will stick together after we get out of the mire.

As soon as we could move, we left our delightful quarters and, crossing a deep slough that now was a deep and rapid torrent in four days, we reached the first hill at the foot of the mountains twenty miles distant.*

Mud Hill, near today's Oroville. *Across the Plains*, 116-117.

One would naturally suppose that once upon the high ground where the water had a chance to run off readily, the road would have been better, but we found the contrary to be the case. Ascending

the first bench, the soft red soil was so completely saturated that any farther movement was utterly out of the question, for in or out of the road, the cattle sunk up to their bellies in mire, and scarcely an hour had passed that some courageous and go-ahead individual did not get fast, and several could not get their cattle out at all, and they perished miserably in the mud. There was not a blade of grass, and the only way left was for us to send our cattle back to the plain below, ten miles, to graze while we erected a kind of bough house (not a "bower of roses") and determined to await the course of events. Up to the present time, over two weeks, I have been on duty as bodyguard to the wagons. Our men come down and take up 35 provisions as they need them, and instead of clearing over a thousand dollars which I should have done with ease upon my load, it is now probable that I shall stay here and eat it all up, and mine is not a solitary instance. It is only an exemplification of hundreds of teams who "went down into Egypt" for corn* when I did. Most of them are still behind, unable to cross the streams, while their companions above are practicing the art of living without food or nearly approximating to it. In the meantime provisions are so scarce and high that hundreds are leaving for the city to buy provisions, intending to spend the winter on the spoils they have already won. Flour here is $200 per bbl., pork, $200; sugar, 75c. per pound; butter, $2.50; rice, 50c.; hard bread, $1.25c.; molasses, $5 per gallon; vinegar, $5; tobacco, $1; pipes from 25 to 50c.; fresh beef, 50c., &c. &c., so that during the rainy season a man can just about pay his way.

Genesis xlii: 2.

Yet you daily hear of men who have been successful and who have got enough to satisfy them in a few weeks. Now I believe this to be the actual state of things at this time. What another season may bring about, I cannot say; but I presume that arrangements will be made to get up provisions so that miners will be better supplied than they are this fall. Heavy shipments of provisions from the States must pay well next year unless it is brought here by speculators. When I first went to Sacramento City, I bought flour at $15 per bbl. Towards the close of the season the speculators put it up to $40. I saw a barrel of sauerkraut sell for $100; pickles (common) sell at $4 per gallon, and were measured in a two-quart measure. They have been scarce and are an invaluable article and almost indispensable in the mines as an anti-scorbutic. Vinegar in the city sells for $1.00 per gallon. The character of the miners so far as I have seen, as a general thing, is highly respectable.

As much order reigns here as at home, and thus far property is more safe. No serious difficulties have occurred, and slight difficulties are adjusted by arbitration.

Firearms and bowie knives are nuisances, and when a man makes a claim, it is respected as long as he works it, as long as he leaves his pick and tools in it.

I still keep a journal of incidents from which I may occasionally copy for you, but this communication is intended simply to place the actual state of things before you as they now exist, independent of a regular routine of events. I am obliged to close this as I have an opportunity of sending it off. Since my leaving home to the present moment, I have not heard a single word from any of my friends. The mails are more than three months behind. I have written you fully of my whole trip besides one or two minor communications, and have written to many friends besides. Whether you will receive 36 my letters or not, I cannot say. An express in now in operation between here and the States, and I shall hereafter send my letters by it to be mailed at some post office in the States, although the cost of each letter is one dollar paid to the agents. I wish all communications and papers to me, to be directed to Sacramento City.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

9. Dawlytown, February 16, 1850.*

DID you ever receive a visit from St. Nicholas in your childhood? With what pleasure did you take down the little well-filled stocking, suspended by a fork at the ingle-side before daylight of a merry Christmas morning, and how your heart swelled with joy as you drew from the deep recess of knit woolen the treasures which the good Santa Claus had left in token of his kind remembrance.

New Orleans *Daily True Delta*, April 26, 1850. This was a Democratic paper, launched on November 18, 1849, and destined to survive until 1866. Its chief owners and editors were John Maginnis (d. 1863) and M. G. Davis (d. 1865). New Orleans *Weekly True Delta*, March 7,

1863; New Orleans *Weekly Times*, January 14, 1865; Winifred Gregory, *American Newspapers, 1821-1936*.

The *California True Delta*, a semi-monthly "steamer" edition of the New Orleans daily, attained the remarkable circulation of 6,500 at Sacramento early in 1851, and according to a local competitor it was the "best paper that comes to California." Sacramento *Union*, March 31, 1851.

As the body of the present letter makes clear, it was addressed to "Colonel" Joseph Grant, agent for the *True Delta*, whom Delano had met at Mud Hill, near Oroville, the previous November, when Grant was prospecting. Since then the agent had written to Delano asking him to undertake a California correspondence for the *True Delta*, and he is happy to comply.

Colonel Grant, prominent in California, 1850-1851, was probably the Joseph Grant who sailed on the brig *Octavia*, June 26, 1849, on her regular run from New Orleans to Chagres, Panama. New York *Herald*, January 30, April 6, June 6, 1850; C. W. Haskins,*Argonauts of California* (New York, 1890), 477. Colonel Joseph Grant conducted a well-advertised business combining real estate, auctioneering, bookselling, money dealing, and the *True Delta* at Front and J Streets, Sacramento, the following two years. He ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1850 and announced he would campaign for governor. Sacramento's first formal historian called attention in 1853 to his promotional, charitable, and eccentric traits. And Delano admired him without reservation. But Grant seems to have disappeared entirely, late in 1851, although a Joseph Grant was an original member of the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board of 1862, and a Joseph Osborn Grant (1818-1883) flourished as a carpenter at Benicia. San Francisco *Alta California*, February 16, April 2, 10, October 9, 1850; Sacramento *Transcript*, October 8-20, December 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 1850; New Orleans *True Delta*, January 9—October 8, 1851; San Francisco *Pacific News*, March 10-24, 1851; Sacramento *Union*, March 19—June 19, 1851; Dr. John F. Morse, *First History of Sacramento* (Sacramento, 1945; original ed., 1853), 3-16; San Francisco *California Chronicle*, April 30, 1856; "Joseph O. Grant," Petition for Letters of Administration, Ms., 1883, in Solano County Courthouse; Joseph L. King,*History of the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board* (San Francisco, 1910), 1-6.

It was a dark, gloomy day, and I was sitting somewhat moodily in my cloth-covered cabin, engaged in the pleasing, though somewhat aristocratic (à la California) occupation of baking the bread 37 which I had mixed up in the morning, when the curtain door of my log palace was suddenly drawn, and our mutual friend Dawly* appeared, with a bundle of papers and a note from you* which Captain Freeland* had brought up from the city. Had old Santa Claus himself appeared with his precious gifts, I could not have been half so much gratified as the sight of that package from you afforded me, and I fear that some of my expressions savored more of childish delight than the calm pleasure of a man of forty.* You have been in the mountains, and know how isolated we are from the world, and particularly at this season of the year when all intercourse with *below* is nearly suspended, and we are left to seek amusement from our own reflection—you can well appreciate the pleasure with which I received your gift. The sight of a late newspaper is rare among us, and when one arrives in the mines it is read and reread, with all its advertisements even, and then it passes from hand to hand till little is left to entitle it to the distinction of being a newspaper. Suffice it then to say, that the package was most truly acceptable, and for which I thank you. When you next visit these diggings I shall be able to afford you something better for a breakfast than that of my self-praised battercake. I have made decided improvement in my culinary education since your sojourn with me at Mud Hill, having taken lessons from that old dame, Madame Necessity; and now, instead of confining my experiments in cooking to heavy griddle cakes, I have been elevated to the high dignity of breadbaker. I most truly hope to be able to give you specimens of my proficiency, at my cabin the coming spring.

A young merchant, otherwise unidentified, for whom Dawlytown was named in 1849. Hanna, *Dictionary of California Land Names*.
Colonel Grant.
John Freeland, captain of the Independent Company of Louisiana Volunteers. William H. Roberts, *Mexican War Veterans* (Washington, 1887), 55.
Delano was forty-three.

I remained mudbound at my quarters at the hill for three weeks, enjoying the *magnificent* scenery of Table Mountain, which was occasionally peeping out of a cloud of fog, or taking a shower bath for days together, as if to drive away the chills and fever of this accursed climate by hydropathy,

when at length, between a race of the sun struggling to shine and the rain to PUT HIM OUT, the road became solid enough to keep my cattle from sinking lower down than their bellies in mud, and I availed myself of the opportunity to get through, in which I succeeded by holding my breath and driving two days to get ten miles. Trouble of conscience for ever leaving home and coming to this *delightful* and Bryant-praised Valley, or something else, produced a severe attack of neuralgia, and I was confined to my bed for three weeks, when I had ample time to 38 groan from intense pain and study patience in all sorts of the most approved styles. On my recovery, for it is a fact that I did not die, I projected a prospecting tour up the South Fork in search of gold and for the purpose of more fully re-establishing my health. A party of nine was organized, it being dangerous to go with less on account of the hostility of the Indians, and in order to give weight to our enterprise we carried our blankets, five days' rations, making our packs about thirty pounds each, besides our prospecting tools, rifles and ammunition. We left in buoyant spirits—in fact we were soon convinced that high as our hopes were, we were rising in the world, and at every step became more and more elevated, for such infernal hills and mountains as we passed over—but you have been on the South Fork; you did not carry our packs, though.

No need of mules here any longer, for after the first day we all became as mulish as the d—l could desire. We were gone just a week and penetrated the snow above the cañon, but in return were penetrated with the frost and cold of the high peaks, while the rain sought shelter in our bosoms, on the lower grounds, for it rained every day and night but one while we were gone, and we looked more like drowned rats than gentlemen gold-seekers. Strange to say, we did not even take a cold, and I gained in strength every day, although wet to the skin all the while. No doubt we should have been drowned were it not for the large quantities of raw, fat, salt pork which we ate. Like the ark, we were pitched within and without. And where was our gold?—echo answers, where! I did not see any, but I saw many places where it ought to be—my pocket, for instance.

We were fortunate enough, however, to secure a bar,* and we are making preparations for removing there as soon as possible. We made some discoveries, too, which may be valuable. Our location is at Wood's Bar, about four or five miles below the Cañon,* where you will find us.

"Ottawa Bar," below Forbestown, on the South Fork of the Feather River. *Across the Plains*, 121-122.
This cañon is apparently the one about a mile and a half above Enterprise. Cf. p. 92.

With regard to "Notes on California," I will comply with your request with pleasure, and will embrace my first leisure to write a "plain, unvarnished tale"* of things as I see them. Most of the people who were here in the fall have gone and are going above,* and we have nearly a deserted village.

Shakespeare, *Othello*, I, iii, 90.
That is, up the South Fork of the Feather River. *Across the Plains*, 119.

A. D.

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10. Sacramento City, March 2, 1850.*

DEAR *Free Trader* —I think the last time I wrote you was from my fortress on Mud Hill (the first mountains from the Valley below my winter quarters), where I lay mud-bound watching " *the sun by day and the moon by night*"* for a propitious moment when I might slide home between the showers. The time at length arrived when the road became firm enough to entitle it to the name of *terra firma*, and I moved my boots with my wagon and its load of truck and plunder to Dawlytown. There, to compensate me for the weeks of toil I had endured in getting up from the city, the pleasant bath I took in the Yuba, where I very nearly lost my life, wagon, goods and cattle, another three weeks of repose was decreed me by the Fates in the shape of neuralgia, with which I suffered all the pain of "Goblins damned,"* but which Dr. Willoughby* assured me would leave me in better health than I had seen for years. Thus far his predictions have been verified, and I am now capable of enduring more fatigue than I ever was before, and Heaven knows I have encountered it. An excursion in the mountains about the 1st of January followed, which occupied a week, during which it rained night and day constantly, and increased the weight of our packs most sensibly, although "we carried weight" without it, consisting of seven days' rations (which we ate up in six, and feasted on cold water on the seventh), our firearms, ammunition and prospecting tools. We penetrated about fifty miles among the hills, wading through snow, fording streams deeper than our boots, clinging

to rocks in passing precipices, keeping a good lookout for the *natives*, who were ready to “pink” us if caught napping, and faring sumptuously upon hard bread.

Free Trader, May 18, 1850.
Cf. Psalms cxxi: 6.
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, iv, 40.
Dr. D. W. C. Willoughby (1814-1875). Born in Vermont, he studied medicine and settled in Indiana, whence he crossed the plains to California in 1849. He died in San Francisco. San Francisco *Alta California*, August 9, 1875.

I made one happy discovery—that the mountains are decidedly the most cold-water country I ever saw, and I give it as my decided opinion—mark me—it is only my own private opinion from which 40 all men may differ—that temperance societies are not needed in those elevated ranges, that it is wholly useless to preach temperance principle upon those mountain peaks. I arrived at this important conclusion from two simple facts—first, because there are neither grog shops nor people there, and second, the most confirmed tippler cannot carry enough of the “ardent” with him to last a week, and he is compelled to use no other beverage than pure cold water. We finally made a claim on two bars on the South Fork of Feather River which are held by our company of nine men and where we are now engaged in the work which brought us to California. These bars of which I speak are low places along the river bank where a deposit of sand, gravel and loose rock was made by the water and where an opportunity is given to cut a race by which to drain the stream from its bed. The gold, being deposited from the hills by the rains and mountain rills into the river, is carried by the current into eddies, holes or pockets, so that it is generally found most abundant in the main bed of streams, and when the water can be turned off it has generally been found to yield a golden harvest. Of course these bars are sought for and it is considered fortunate to obtain one. The South Fork of Feather River had been but little prospected until late last fall, and as late as December there were but three or four cabins for the distance of twenty miles above Dawlytown. I started out the moment my health permitted, though at great risk, the second day of January, when to our great surprise we found a cabin nearly every mile and sometimes little settlements of five to ten houses, so great had been the rush up to the Fork when its deposits became known.—These were almost wholly those persons who had remained on Long's and Bidwell bars (the latter where I made my first *debut*) and who had supplied themselves with provisions to remain in the mountains during the winter, thus having the advantage of those who might come on in the spring. When I arrived at Bidwell's

or Dawlytown from my last trip to the city, a great change had taken place. Tents and people had disappeared, and the population was reduced nearly three fourths, but on going up the Fork I found a great part of our old friends in various locations, living snugly in comfortable log cabins on their claims. The utmost respect is paid by miners to each other's claim. Some little difficulty occurred last fall between two companies respecting the right to a claim or a portion of it, when a general convention was called at the Oregon Bar on the South Fork on New Year's day, for the purpose of defining what constituted a claim and to have a general and mutual understanding with regard to each other's rights. Among intelligent and liberal men, this matter was soon settled upon just and equitable principles.

Every man or company making a claim to a bar or to portions, to put up three written notices giving the boundary of his claim. He 41 then must take actual possession within ten days and commence his work in some tangible form so that it was apparent he would be a bona fide occupant and not claim to the exclusion of others. He then registered his name or bar on the books of the Association (thus formed) and became a member, and in the event of others attempting to drive him off, he was entitled to the protection of all the companies constituting the Association. He was allowed all the bed of the stream which he drained to a medium stage of water and then ten feet front and thirty back from that point. This is a general outline of the plan, although there are of course a few minor details as the condition of things required, but this is looked to and spoken of along the river with as much deference and respect as if it was the law of the land. Indeed, as things are now situated in the mines, an action of Congress or of our own Legislature is wholly unnecessary, and if either undertakes to erect a Miners' Code without practical experience, I shall then look for difficulties which will not occur so long as the miners are left to themselves.*

A comprehensive account of California miners' codes and their operation is given in Charles H. Shinn, *Mining Camps: A Study in American Frontier Government* (New York, 1948; original ed., 1883).

As soon as we made our claims, we commenced preparations to establish them; in due time our cabins were built, although we had to pack our provisions about fifteen miles, over hills that a mule could scarcely pass, and our two races are nearly completed, ready to put in our dams as soon as the spring floods subside. I never was so much exposed, never worked so hard, never fared so roughly

as I did during those preliminary arrangements, and it seemed as if my health and strength gained with the emergency, and I now find myself in more comfortable quarters than I have been in since I have been in California.

Time will not permit me to give you an account of the flood this winter, but I will simply say that from a high mountain, from which I had an extended view, I estimated that at least one quarter of this Earthly Paradise, this charming and fertile Valley (oh!) was under water. Hundreds of cattle and mules were drowned and floated down to rejoice with the aromatic scent of their putrid carcasses the refined olfactory nerves of the citizens of Sacramento and other towns springing up on the River —(where's Mr. Bryant?), and the loss of property in Sacramento City by the overflow has been very great. For a particular description of the scene here I must refer you to the N. O. *True Delta,* whose able and talented correspondent was an eye-witness.* Among the indignants of the city when the flood was bearing off tents, houses, &c., the Methodist church turned around on its foundation like a dancing master on his heel as if in 42 high dudgeon to enquire of the neighboring dwelling as they were about departing: Ye graceless chiefs, where are ye goin' While I am here sae busy sowin'?—(*Burns* —not quite),*

and a steamboat has put a blush on all the canals in Amsterdam, for it actually puffed through the main street and discharged its cargo into Starr, Bensley and Company's store.*

Colonel Grant. For the great Sacramento flood of 1850 (and the ones of 1852, 1853, 1861, and 1878) see *History of Sacramento* (Oakland, 1880), 66-73.
These are Burns' words, but not his lines.
One of the principal stores at Sacramento. John Bensley (1812-1889), a native of Herkimer County, New York, and a graduate of Columbia College, came to California in 1849. He organized a water works in San Francisco in 1857, and many other California companies. *Across the Plains*, 127; San Francisco *Call*, June 21, 1889.

Learning that a “change came o'er the spirit of my dream”* with regard to the honesty of some of our Californians, and that they were stealing cattle on the plains, with a Digger-like propensity, to supply the places of their own lost ones, I thought it best to go “down into Egypt”* and look after my own, which had been turned out after I reached Dawlytown in the fall. I succeeded in finding three and, driving them back, brought my wagon to the Valley, and disposed of the whole

concern, believing that my prospects in the mines are better than trading. As I had to come halfway to Sacramento to find a market I just kept on to see if it were not possible to find a letter from home. I may as well say that I have been disappointed, and the only letter which I have received since I left Ottawa from any friend was one from my wife dated August 25. This I walked fifteen miles to get when I heard of the arrival of the Express a week ago, and I would have walked a hundred for another with the greatest pleasure.

Byron, *The Dream*.
Genesis xlii; 2.

I have written the *Free Trader* by every opportunity while cross-the plains, have sent a full (or nearly full) copy of my journal from leaving the Missouri up to my arrival in California,* and several other letters, and I have not received even a paper from Ottawa. Of course this must be the fault of the mails, and not of my friends. I arrived here day before yesterday at night.—Yesterday morning on going into the street I met Charles Fisher, William Irwin, Captain Reed* and S. B. Gridley from Ottawa,* Mr. Reynolds, and 43 William Miller, from South Bend, Indiana,* and Colonel Wilson, from Mishawaka, Indiana.* By some of them I heard of the Dayton Company, who have done very well in the mines, and of Mr. Fredenburg and B. K. Thorn. The latter I was glad to hear was doing well. As a general thing those who have staid in the mines, worked steadily, and have not run about prospecting all over the country, have done something. Those of our South Bend friends that I have met have done something—some of them well.—I met Mr. Rood* on my way down.—He was going to the Yuba mines in high spirits. He has located himself at Vernon, twenty-five miles above this place,* and is well satisfied with what he has done and is doing. W. McNeil is with me (in the mines), a kind-hearted, generous man—as good a fellow as ever trod shoe leather —"may he live a thousand years."* This is about all the personal news I can give of interest in your community—except the death of James Bacon—he died a short time ago in Yubaville. I was much surprised on coming to the Valley to see the change which a few weeks have wrought by our indefatigable Anglo-Saxons. When I made my trip down from Lawson's in September, there were but three houses or ranchos on the road, a distance of perhaps an hundred and twenty or twenty-five

miles. There may have been half a dozen on and off the road in the Valley. Now there is a house every five or six miles, not only on the road where water can be obtained even where the land has been overflowed, but from Vernon down houses appear nearly every mile, and I was assured that this was the case at least seventy miles above Lawson's.

Cf. p. 19.
Henry J. Reed (b. 1814), of Ottawa. He came to La Salle County from Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1834 and served in the Mexican War, becoming a captain. In 1849 he went to California and remained two years, but returned to Ottawa to settle down as a farmer. *History of LaSalle County, Illinois*, 1886, II, 99-100.
Samuel B. Gridley (d. 1876) was prominent for over forty years at Ottawa as a dealer in dry goods and manager of a gas company. *Ottawa: Old and New*, 38, 77; Elmer Bladwin, *History of LaSalle County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1877), 239-240.
William Miller went overland from South Bend to California in 1849 and remained until 1852, when he returned to South Bend to become a successful contractor, miller, banker, and mayor. Goodspeed Bros., *Pictoral and Biographical Memoirs of Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1893), 672.
Charles Lincoln Wilson (1813-1890). Born in Maine, he crossed the plains and mountains to San Francisco in 1849 and brought the first steamer to the upper waters of the Sacramento River, all the way to Lassen's. He was the first promoter of a Sacramento Valley railroad. Sacramento *Themis*, December 20, 1890.
Walter D. Rood, from the Ottawa region. “In 1849 he went to California with the Green party. Twenty years later he returned to LaSalle County.” *Ottawa: Old and New*, 27.
The name Vernon was changed to Verona in 1906. Gudde, *California Place Names*.
William McNeil, of Ottawa. *Free Trader*, February 9, 1850; *Across the Plains*, 119, 122.

New towns are springing up, defective as titles are, and business seems thriving in them all. On reaching the Yuba, I found the town of Marysville, where three months ago only an adobe house existed; a mile below on the Feather is Yuba City, which at that time did not contain a house; two miles below this Eliza, just commenced and buildings going up rapidly; at Bear Creek, where I lost an ox last fall in a swamp, a town plot is being surveyed, and at the mouth 44 of Feather River, where late in the fall only a ranch existed, Nicolaus is laid out, houses going rapidly up, and lots selling off like hot cakes.* At the upper towns lots sell for from five hundred to three thousand dollars, and so with the lower towns. Although this city has been under water, lots are still advancing and improvements going on continually. A levee will be built around it to keep out the floods, and it must always be a town of importance, but in all these places the time will, must, come when the bubble will burst and many individuals be ruined.

This town was named after Nicolaus Allgeier, a Hudson's Bay trapper who came to California in 1840, worked for Sutter, and settled here about 1846. Hanna, *Dictionary of California Land Names*. Colonel Grant advertised lots at Nicolaus. Sacramento *Transcript*, October 8-20, 1850.

During the flood a large portion of the Valley was overflowed between the Yuba and Bear Creek. A Mr. Spencer, at whose house I stopped in my peregrination, told me he was obliged to crawl onto the roof of his house to save himself, although it stands at least thirty feet above the river, and that a neighbor sailed in a boat back to the mountains, some twelve or fifteen miles.—Now, the roads are good, the grass green, and the plain dotted with herds of cattle, where a few days ago all was a wide waste of turbid water.

And this is the charming Valley you have read so much of at home, as surpassing everything else in loveliness. I am much amused at the sage remarks of some of the New York editors, respecting California. In speaking of the gold after its exhaustion, they dilate upon its agricultural capacities, its central position, its high destiny, &c. (Well, I *reckon* it is about in the middle of the earth, if you begin to measure exactly opposite, &c.) It is no more fit for farming purposes than I am for preaching. Exhaust the gold and it will no longer attract ships to its shore only to carry back the poor devils who are caught here in search of El Dorado, and instead of ships taking in cargoes of tea at San Francisco, they will quietly pursue their way from the Atlantic ports through the Isthmus canal, if it is built; if not, around the Cape, wind and weather permitting, to Canton, and receive their lading as usual from the brother of the sun and moon, and seven stars, and other planets. But as the auctioneer says, “I can't dwell;” nobody will believe it till they come and see—come then and get all the gold you can, for sure enough *that* is here, *if you can get it*; then you may talk understandingly of its high destiny and superior advantages over your really rich, beautiful and fertile prairies at home. Had I not seen them I might have thought the Valley of the Sacramento beautiful, but I have seen them.—Beauty is a comparative quality, and by that standard I judge.

Among the most pleasant acquaintance which I have formed in this “never-saw-the-like country” is that of Joseph Grant, Esq., the accomplished correspondent of the *True Delta*

Misery makes strange bedfellows, saith the adage, and a day's walk together in the mountains during the rains, and a night spent in company at my ranch on Mud Hill, opened the door of our hearts, and we walked into an intellectual feast that I shall never forget. I do not mean to eulogize

any man, but here where there are so many castes, shades and qualities, and when hardships have been mutually endured, and you find a man stands upon his own bottom through it all without flinching, your heart will warm towards him in spite of you. Picture to yourself a well-educated, well-bred, open-hearted gentleman, one of much thought, originality of mind, just conceptions, with a rare knowledge of human nature *as it is*, dress him up in a California suit with a blanket strapped to his back, and a bag of hard bread and raw pork under his arm, and put him to climbing high hills or driving into deep gorges in a pouring rain, and you have Colonel Grant in the mountains.

Take the same person in the city, gathering a crowd around him by original and droll harangues, raising a laugh by his witticisms, assuming a care-for-nothing demeanor, selling city lots, holding rancho meetings of his own appointment, where he elects himself President, Secretary, committee of the whole, and keeps a large audience amused and interested two hours on a stretch by his oddities, leaving you to doubt whether his eccentricity is real or feigned, while he sells you a town lot or a package of papers. While you may be conning it in your mind, he may offer you a paper to relieve someone in distress, for some charitable object, something of paramount good, and here you cannot doubt his real feelings, for nature is in it, and you find yourself obliged to respect him at home. Then to his personal friends—if he ever gets rich, and I think he is in a fair way to, he will want to make them rich too. You will never find the author of those letters in the street, nor the odd eccentric in the study. The body may be visible along the sidewalk, but the author and man of reflection is at home in the social circle.

A queer portrait, isn't it? but I believe it a just one and I value his acquaintance for his real talents and kindness.

A droll misfortune occurred a few nights ago to a miner three or four miles from us. He lay sleeping in his tent on the ground, when he was awakened by something twitching his pantaloons. Opening his eyes, he saw a wolf of the coyote species with his purse containing two or three hundred dollars in gold dust in his mouth. He sprang up, but the varmint ran off clear with the purse, and the poor fellow lost it entirely. The purse was made of dried deerskin and he supposes had partially worked

out of his pocket as he lay on the ground, and the wolf, smelling the skin, seized it and drew it out and was off before the man could collect himself sufficiently to rescue it.

A good joke occurred not long since, illustrating life in California 46 this winter. During the rains, boats occasionally ascend Feather River with supplies nearly to the mountains. My neighbor and friend, Mr. Dawly, who is trading, has associated with a jovial, good-hearted man yclept Captain Freeland, late of the U. S. Army, and as brave a man as any who was at the storming of Chapultepec. They have a boat on the river, and Captain Freeland happened to be below and on his way to the city. One afternoon the hands on board wanted some fresh meat, and Freeland and the captain of the boat went on shore to try to kill a deer. A short walk brought them to the open plain where they discovered two men butchering a wild ox. “Ah, my fine fellow, we've caught you at it,” shouted Freeland. “We have you now sure enough.” Much to his surprise, the two men seized their arms, &c., and started off at full run across the plain. The secret was out. They had stolen the ox, and supposing Freeland and his companion to belong to the ranch and the owners, they took to their heels. Freeland and the captain walked up and finished the butchering and took possession of the beef and carried it to the boat and were supplied with all the fresh meat they wanted for many a day. My time has expired, and I can give you no more *on dits* now. You will hear from me from time to time. Direct your papers and letters to me at Sacramento City—I may stand a remote chance of getting them.

Truly yours,

A. Delano.

II. Ottawa Bar, March 12, 1850.*

DEAR SIR—Without offering any other apology for trespassing on your time than my own inclination and the kind remembrances of our acquaintance, I sit down on a rainy day to write you of California. It is quite likely that you are, ere this, surfeited with such news, for it must be that the papers are filled with the lucubrations of a multitude of letter-writers, but the changes in this

recently explored country are so great that it would almost be a constant occupation for a man to keep pace with them with his pen. The great emigration last year has indeed wrought great changes in the aspect of things socially and politically, and the vast crowd that we learn is coming out the present season will not experience the same 47 hardships and destitution on their arrival that we did, although they will have enough, God knows, to curse the day they set out. On our arrival in the Valley last year, there were but four ranchos on the road for a distance of two hundred miles (from Reading's diggings* to Sacramento City), and now there are stopping places and towns at convenient distances along the whole route where the necessaries of life can be obtained, although at exorbitant rates, while that character for unheard-of honesty among the people in towns where thousands of dollars worth of property lay continually exposed night and day is undergoing a change. A recent visit to Sacramento made me cognizant of the great and rapid change three months had produced. I found towns springing up along the banks of the navigable streams, with speculation rife in town lots as you ever knew it in the city where ninety days ago not a single house stood. Lots are selling in these newly laid-out towns from five hundred to three or four thousand dollars, with titles not worth a pin, and the whole country in my humble opinion is bound to be a scene of litigation and a sea of trouble. The whole domain of the inhabitable portions of Alta California consists chiefly of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. But a small portion of these are any way suited for agricultural purposes, and much of that even is overflowed by the floods of winter and spring, and this whole country is in the hands of a few, say forty or fifty men, who claim the territory under Mexican grants. Sutter, for instance, lays claim to a hundred square miles, Lawson to ten, Davis to as much more, while Neal,* Potter,* and Reading take the rest, occupying —rather claiming, the Valley of the Sacramento from Sacramento City to Reading's mines. The southern portions of the country are held in the same way by the very few. In the meantime the emigration of last year is here and many who came with families for the purpose of making a permanent home, and others who, unable to dig or disappointed in mining, are disposed to work on lands which they thought originally belonged to *our government*, have taken possession upon the principle and are warned off by these Mexican claimants. Men who have braved the perils of an overland journey to this country and who, perhaps, are unable to return, will have a home.

Free Trader, May 18, 1850. The editor accounts for the formal tone of this letter by explaining that it was written to Judge John D. Caton (1812-1895), of Ottawa. He was born at Monroe, New York, practiced law at Utica, and in 1839 went to Illinois, where he was Justice of the State Supreme Court, 1842-1864. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Delano signs the letter "Fraternally yours," indicating that Caton was a brother in the I.O.O.F., and commends his family "to the care of my brethren." Cf. *Ottawa: Old and New*, 156-157.

On Clear Creek in present-day Shasta County. Pierson B. Reading (1816-1869) came overland to California in 1843, worked for Sutter as clerk and chief of trappers, and secured the grant of Santa Buenaventura rancho in 1844. Reading served in the California Battalion, 1846-1847, as a major, and ran for governor in 1851. Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 689.

Samuel Neal (d. 1859) came to California in 1844, worked for Sutter, and received a Mexican grant near present-day Chico. He helped Fremont in the insurrection of 1846. Sacramento *Union*, August 22-23, 30, 1859; Bancroft, *History of California*, IV, 752.

John Potter settled in the Chico region, 1844-1846, and in 1848 profitably employed Indians in the mines. He died about 1851. Bancroft, *History of California*, IV, 783.

They would be willing that these claimants and pioneers should have a princely fortune, perhaps, but they will have an abiding place 48 for themselves, their wives and children, and any attempt to dislodge them will produce a combination and union which will require a military force to break up. Should the government recognize these Mexican grants, it places the multitude at the mercy of the few, engrafting in fact the peon system of Mexico or the feudal tenure of Europe upon our republican institutions in California, making a few lords of the soil with a multitude of dependents upon their will, a state of things to which our Anglo-Saxon race are strangers and to which they will not submit. Should the government not acknowledge the right of these Mexican claims, and assume the fee simple of the soil in itself, and by its justice and liberality confirm the squatters in their professions even by paying a fixed price for their lands, much of the difficulty will be obviated, and so too even if government concurs in the validity of those claims, if it *will buy out* the claimants and then confirm to the present occupants the righ of pre-emption. In this unsettled state of things, towns are laid out, lots and ranches change hands, and at prices, too, that cannot be sustained even in this land of gold; so that when the bubble bursts, as it surely will, litigation, failures and trouble must ensue, making a paradise for lawyers and a hell for clients.*

I do not anticipate for California that high destiny which many of our citizens at home do. I have read several plausible and well-written editorials upon the subject in various city papers, but they originated with men either interested in some scheme or unacquainted with the actual condition of the country. I believe that in political economy every prosperous State must depend upon its

own proper resources for its prosperity. For instance, New England has its waterpower, its wool, &c.; the Middle Western and Southern states have their crops, timber, wool, coal, tobacco, sugar, &c.,&c., to give employment to the shipping of our seaboard. As an agricultural country, California will amount to nothing. The climate and most of the soil is antagonistic, and an ordinary population must be fed and clothed by importation. Its true source of wealth is in its mines, and so long as they continue prolific, commerce to a certain extent will be drawn to its shores. Its being a halfway house to China amounts to nothing. A merchant in New York fitting out a ship for a load of tea will avail himself of the Isthmus canal when completed, but intsead of purchasing a cargo at San Francisco, paying there a commission and profit, storage, &c., will send his ship direct as usual to Canton, and buy from first hands, and then return by the usual route to New York, rather than make a forty or fifty days' sail out of the way of San Francisco. If a railroad is even built from the States, it cannot compete in prices of freight with steamships or sail vessels and pay a profit to the San Francisco dealer. A railroad, however, will 49 benefit the *traveling* community and be beneficial as a communication. The gold mines are the true and legitimate source of wealth of California, and after their exhaustion, you may mark the decline of this unjustly praised country. It may reach a mushroom growth, but it will eventually be thrown upon its own resources and sink to its own proper level. Oregon will be substantially benefited; for there, wheat can be grown and its waterpower will produce the flour to feed California, while its manufactures of woolen goods will be exchanged for the mineral wealth of its sister State.

Cf. Royce, *op. cit*.

I found in my recent visit below* that great anticipations were formed as to the amount of gold to be raised the coming season in the mines. This, I think, will be in some measure justified. A much larger number of persons are engaged in the mines, than heretofore—new mines are opened—new discoveries are made, and the use of quicksilver will be more general than usual in mining. The use of the latter in separating the gold from the sand is beginning to be understood, and the quality of fine gold obtained by its aid is nearly doubled while the expense is but little increased. Bars that have been worked over in the old mode by the common rocker will pay well with a quicksilver machine.

To Sacramento the previous October.

I have heard of some extraordinary results, and we shall work the bars in which I am concerned in that way, though you will always bear in mind that no gold can be obtained only by hard labor, privation and hardships.

There are two things which cannot be ascertained with any certainty—the actual number of men engaged in the mines and the amount of gold raised. I have seen statements of arrivals of gold in the United States, and the average amount is sometimes compared with the numbers who left the States. Now the fact is that thousands who came over are not engaged in mining, while a large amount of that which is raised goes to Oregon, Mexico, Chile and South America, the Sandwich Islands, China and Europe without even passing through the United States. This drain of gold to foreign nations might be stopped by an action of our government, in which it would be heartily seconded by the American population here. I surely can see no more injustice in such a measure than in forbidding foreigners from cutting timber on our public lands. There is one thing which even our government may find a difficulty in carrying out, and that is the laying out of mines in lots. This is a matter which has already regulated itself, and miners have made their own laws, which are as much respected as any action of Congress can be, for they are founded upon justice and equity.

It amounts simply to about this: that a man is entitled to work *bona fide* that portion of a stream he actually turns from its bed, and 50 the streams are of such a nature that very extensive claims cannot be made, while numerous bars afford room for many occupants. No set of men, without being acquainted with localities and the " *modus operandi*" of mining, can make good laws regulating claims. The wisest thing Congress can do, at present at least, is to pass the subject " *sub silento*."* Knowing, as you do, the character of the miners, you will not wonder at the order and good feeling that pervades generally throughout, and so far I have known of no difficulty of a serious nature since my residence in the mines. A mint is much needed here, for now gold dust sells at sixteen dollars per ounce, when its actual value is eighteen to twenty dollars, and then in purchasing drafts in addition to that rate for gold we are obliged to pay from five to ten per cent. premium, or at that rate, for the transportation of gold dust to the States.

Silently.

At the close of the digging season last fall a large portion of the miners went to Sacramento and San Francisco. The most of these were men who had come into the mines late and had barely accumulated a few hundred dollars, while the high price of provisions made them fancy that while they could not subsist in the mines, the more moderate rates in the cities would enable them to get through the winter with their slender means. Among them, however, were many who had made nothing and who depended on their labor there for support. The consequence was, those places were soon filled with a needy crowd. Wages fell, for there was no business at that season, and want and suffering and starvation stared them full in the face. The dissipations, too, of the city induced many who had a little money to indulge, and they were soon left penniless. And then came the other alternative. Stealing became as common as before it had been unknown, and property was no longer safe in being exposed, and it now has to be guarded with the same care as in a *civilized* country, where *law and order* prevail. I am happy to say that in the mines things in this respect remain in " *statu quo*."—Gambling, too, maintains its foothold in the old towns as well as the new. Every public house, every saloon (and there are multitudes of splendid ones), has its band of music to attract a crowd and a row of gambling tables around their spacious halls. I know of a young man who had worked till he had got $18,000 and started for home. On reaching Sacramento, he placed $16,000 in the hands of a friend to keep while he took the $2,000 and went to the monte table. He soon lost it, and went to his friend and took the $16,000 to redeem his luck. This he lost also, and instead of going home, his own folly forced him back into the mines a penniless wretch.

Another went in with his fall's labor in his pocket, about $1,600 or $1,800. This he soon lost, and with perfect *sang froid* he 51 exclaimed—"Gentlemen, you have got all my money—give me an ounce to get back to the mines with." The gambler handed him sixteen dollars without a word, and the poor fool went back to his labor and his privations again. These occurred but a few days ago.

Living has been very dear in the country; if a man could make each day pay its way during the winter, he was doing well on the whole. Those who remained in the mines through the winter were those chiefly who had been able and fortunate enough to secure provisions before the rains set in. Yet many trusted to luck for supplies.—I know two men who paid out $1,400 from the middle of

November to the middle of February for their provisions alone. This is easily enough accounted for by flour $300 per bbl., pork $200, sugar $1 per pound, molasses $12 per gallon, vinegar $5, potatoes 75c. to $1.25 per *pound*, &c. &c. My recent trip to Sacramento and back actually cost me a hundred dollars, traveling expenses, though I slept on the ground and indulged in no luxuries, and it is only one hundred miles. I walked all the way down to within twenty-five miles, and when I came back I rode about half way in the steamboat and walked the rest. I paid an ounce to have a bag of clothes carried twelve miles. The price of a meal is now $1.50 everywhere, a chance to sleep under a tent or roof $1.00, and you have to find your own bedding and blankets. At only two places in California have I ever found milk for my coffee, and I never saw butter on the dinner table. A common (and very common too) dried apple pie costs a dollar, a small baker's loaf, fifty cents. If you feel aristocratic enough to indulge in oysters, half a dozen costs $1.50. By the way, I never go within smelling distance of them, they smell so strong of the pocket. Oranges are from 75c. to $1 each, ale and cider 25c. per glass, so that it pays a man to drink nothing but cold water. We pay 50c. to get our letters carried to a post office, and if any are brought back (a circumstance which has happened to me in only one solitary instance) we pay from $1 to $2, as we *can light upon chaps*,* and 40c. postage. Do you not think the mines ought to yield well to live in such a country? I know of four men who washed out $100,000 in four weeks, sold their claim for $1,000, which was paid in two days, and $4,000 taken out before the rains set in. I have picked up gold on a sidehill after a rain, but in quantity too small to pay. As an offset I know of hundreds who have made nothing in weeks of hard labor, of those who have died miserably for want of medicine and mere necessaries, and those whose constitutions are ruined forever before they could earn a dollar. Such is California now, and such will be the fate of thousands that are rushing in from the States with high hopes and bright anticipations. I had no idea of inflicting a letter upon you of such unconscionable length, and although there is still much left untold, I will not trespass 52 longer on your patience. I am in better health than I have been in five years, though I have had a severe acclimation, and I have at least a year of hard labor before me in working out the bars I have become possessed of. During my uncertain absence, I commend my family to the care of my brethren, and I do not doubt that they will receive from you such attention as your kindness of heart will prompt you to bestow.

My kind regards to Mrs. C.* I need scarcely say that I shall be glad to hear from you. Direct all communications to Sacramento City.

Find someone to pay.
Laura Adelaide Sherrill Caton (d. 1892); she was married in 1835. *Ottawa: Old and New, 90; U. S. Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery: Illinois Volume* (Chicago, 1876), 8-9.

Fraternally yours,

A. DELANO.

12. Ottawa Bar, Feather River,* March 22, 1850.

IF CALIFORNIA at this moment has little real claim to notoriety among the countries of the globe, it may be entitled the land of incidents, for you can scarcely make a journey of twenty miles without meeting some adventure worthy a paragraph. It was during a walk of ten miles in the mountains, through a drizzling rain in November, that I became acquainted with our mutual friend, G—.* My wagon and goods lay mudbound on the brow of the first mountain above the Valley, and I had built a bower (not of roses) by the 53 roadside, waiting the course of the storms, hoping there might be a cessation of strife between the sun and rain long enough to enable me to get up to my location at Dawlytown. It was during a casual visit to my headquarters that I saw Mr. G- -, and on my return he was my companion and guest for the night. It is by his request that I write you, though the subject is an “oft-told tale” and nothing new can well be added. I speak of California—of California as I found it. Not the land of Ophir, where Solomon got his gold, nor of the dwelling-place of the Genius of Aladdin, but simply of one hundred and thirty miles of the famed Valley of the Sacramento and of the neighboring mountains which I have traveled over. I am one of that class of nomad Anglo-Saxons who, in their modest desire of obtaining sudden wealth by picking the golden lumps from the piles which the mountain groaned under here (once), crossed the plains last summer, and in order to get to the gold region before all others, took the cut-off to Feather River, about sixty-five miles above the sink of Mary's River.* For this happy hit, I had the pleasure of going four hundred miles further than by the old road; of living three weeks on hard bread and

coffee, and nothing else; of fighting Indians nearly all the way; and finally of reaching the confines of El Dorado four weeks later than those who kept the "even tenor of their way"* on the old route. All that I had read of the Valley of the Sacramento, previous to leaving the States, was highly in favor of its beauty, the fertility of its soil, the salubrity of its climate, and the clearness of its atmosphere, all of which led me to expect a kind of natural Eden, and by passing many weeks on barren sand plains, nearly destitute of vegetation, or crossing rocky and barren mountains, I was in a good condition to appreciate any change for the better. The view from the mountain, as far as I could see, was pleasant, but I thought at the moment that it would not compare with the rich views of many of our western prairies; and I think so still. The following is a short extract from my journal on the day I reached the Valley, which is to the point on the first and third counts:

True Delta, June 6, 1850.
Grant.
The Lassen Trail left the Humboldt (or Mary's) before the sink. Cf. pp. 16-17, 23.
Cf. Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

"September 16

—On regaining the road and ascending a high hill, the Valley of the Sacramento lay before me, five or six miles distant. I could discern green trees and a level bottom, but the day was too smoky for an extended view."

There are trees, and occasionally groves, but in nearly every instance they are on the banks of the stream, or on soil that is subject to being overflowed by the winter floods, or where sloughs or wet places moisten the earth sufficiently to afford sap to sustain their growth. The trees in the Valley are of the stunted growth; you can 54 scarcely find one of eighteen inches in diameter that is sound at the butt or fit for staves. They are often large at the butt and branch out to an enormous distance, but do not grow tall and thrifty, as we see them in the mountains or at home.

In immediate proximity to the streams, the soil appears fertile, and good crops of wheat can be raised if the land can be irrigated. But three or four miles from the stream, unless in the vicinity of sloughs, the grass is dry and crisp by August, and where any attempt is made at farming, deep

trenches are dug around the field, from some creek, to irrigate the dry and parched soil. I have not seen any as large potatoes here even as is common at home, and they can grow only in the neighborhood of streams.

Extract 2.—"For some miles after reaching the Valley the ground was covered with round stone and debris which appeared to have been originally thrown out by some volcano, and then washed by floods to their present place of deposit."

I say without hesitation, let no man come here for agricultural speculation while there is a corner left between the Alleghenies and the Platte. The soil is no better than the prairies of Indiana, Illinois and Missouri, while rain rarely falls between June and November.

In speaking of the salubrity of the climate, Mr. Bryant says (I quote from memory) that "the purity of the air is such that dead carcasses of animals emit no offensive smell.*

Cf. p. 27.

This may be so on the Coast, for I have not yet been there; but unless Mr. B.'s olfactory nerves are hopelessly disordered, he must be convinced by this time that it will not apply to the Valley of the Sacramento. The stench around Sacramento City in September and October was almost insufferable, arising from putrid carcasses of mules and oxen that had perished in the mire of the slough on the north side of the city, and nowhere in the Valley where I have been, have I found it different in this respect from the States. So far as my observation extends I should judge that five sixths of the emigrants from the States have suffered from sickness—bloody flux, diarrhea, and chills and fever, and I have been told by those who have lived here three and four years that they are subject to the same diseases. This must always be so, for the fervid heat of the summer sun produces rapid decay of vegetable and animal matter along the low grounds, and the cold nights are on the other extreme, which no prudence can obviate. I never saw so much suffering and misery from disease in all my life as I have seen during a five months' residence in California.

A great share of those who arrived in the Valley and the mines in good health were, more or less, stricken by disease, and I could give you many heart-rending individual cases. It is more than an

even 55 chance that every emigrant must be sick after his arrival. No doubt exposure and bad diet contribute much in producing disease, but the very nature of the climate, the extremes between the heat of the day and the cold night air, must make it unhealthy. You may lay down in the evening without a rag of covering over you, and before morning you may be shivering in your blanket in August. In summer, many of the mountain streams are dry, and in going down the Valley from Lawson's to Sacramento City, the traveler often suffers for water, and sometimes when he finds it, it is in a mud hole, warm and unpalatable, so that a flowing creek is looked upon as a gem. I append a table of distances from Lawson's to the city (by general estimation) on the road, which I made in passing down, showing where grass and water was found last September:

So you see that you have to travel long distances for water in the season you need it most. As for the clearness of the atmosphere, it 56 may vary, for aught I know, but I give you another extract from my journal:

“Nov. 12:

The rain ceased in the night after a week's steady continuation, and the air was clear enough, for the first time, to see across the Valley.

“We broke up our camp where we had laid weather-bound for a week, and although I was still very weak from the severe attack of the flux, I managed to crawl along by the side of my wagon at the slow pace at which we were traveling.

“On ascending a small eminence, we had a distinct view of the Coast Range covered with snow, and as far as we could see they were a confused mass of high, peaked and broken mountains. It is remarkable, chiefly that this is the first day since I entered California that the weather has been clear enough to see both sides of the Valley.”

I do not doubt that in the spring, when the rains have cleared the atmosphere of the smoky vapors, fine views are afforded of mountain scenery as well as of the Valley. The rain commenced on the 3rd of November, with but slight intimation of its approach. For three weeks it rained almost

constantly, and then the longest interval was ten days. January was the worst month, and scarcely two days passed in succession without rain. Business led me to the first hill about three weeks ago, and from a high mountain from which I had an extended view of the Valley, I estimated that about one quarter was covered with water. You will receive accounts of Sacramento City being submerged by the flood, and I need say nothing of it here.

I look upon all praise of the Valley of the Sacramento, for agricultural purposes, for extreme beauty, for salubrity of climate, or for a desirable residence, as being a perfect misnomer. In summer, the Valley is an arid plain, except in the immediate vicinity of streams; in winter, much of the fruitful portions are under water. The mountains have a barren soil, where grass even will not grow, only on patches in small valleys, and the hardy pine and cedar, with few varieties of oak and mountain shrubs, can alone maintain a foothold. Of the two first, they are the finest trees I ever saw of their species. I have seen them more than two hundred feet high, and if they could be got into the Valley would be as valuable as the gold of the mountains.

It seems to me that the most truthful account of California which was published up to 1849 is of the gold. I do not think the quantity and extent of country over which the range passes has been exaggerated. I think it is a continuation of the golden range from South America through to Asia. Instead of being confined to particular localities, as far as my observation extends, you may go up any of the streams, creeks, or ravines, from the Valley east to a 57 certain distance where the depth of the ravine is about the same and find it—of course in greater or less quantities, for it does not appear to be equally distributed. But exciting as the existence of gold is in the mountains, it is by no means certain that anyone can get it. The labor of digging it has not been understood, nor the risks and exposure of finding it appreciated. It does not lay on top of the ground to be picked up like acorns under an oak. To begin the process then. The gold-hunter must first find a location.

To do this, he puts five or six days' rations into his knapsack, straps his blankets to his shoulders, for nobody moves here without his bed on his back, takes a pick, pan and shovel, firearms and ammunition, making his load fifty pounds if he is determined to succeed before he returns. Then he follows the course of some stream up the mountains, climbing high hills, descending deep

ravines, day after day, sleeping on the ground at night, clambering over rocks along the stream, and loosening the dirt with his pick occasionally to try his luck. When he finds it in apparent quantity to pay for working he returns, in order to get ready to go to work.

He either gets a mule or takes provisions on his back, and exploring a road to his location that a mule can get over, though this cannot always be found, he returns to “dig for gold.”

If he works in the bank, he digs down till he comes to the *base rock* or to hard clay, and then washes the dirt nearest to and on the rock, and in the crevices. If he works in the bed of the stream, he often finds it necessary to turn the water through a side race, which is a work of much labor, and then he must move the gravel, rocks and stones, sometimes to the depth of six or seven feet, until he comes to the *bed stone*, where the gold is mixed with the last dirt, which he washes out. He sometimes finds lumps of gold lodged in the crevices after he removes the earth, but as a general thing he has to perform a vast deal of hard labor before he gets to the base rock. The reason of gold always being at the bottom, you know, is because it has more density than sand or gravel, and when it is washed by water, of course sinks first. A good deal of mirth has been excited among the miners at reading a notice in the papers that some wise citizens of Chicago are coming out with a mud machine attached to a scow, to scrape up the mud from the bed of the Sacramento and wash it for gold. Before they get a scale, they will have to scrape the mud to the base rock, and then go down in diving bells and dig the dirt out of the crevices with spoons, and then, as the Indian said of the white man, it's “ *mighty onsartain*.” The miner may spend weeks and scarcely get enough to pay his board; and this has been the case with, I may well say, thousands the past fall. Again: he may be fortunate and strike a good place, and take up thousands of dollars. When this last is the case, it is sounded far and near; every paper is ringing with it, and more converts to the 58 shrine of the California mammon made. But do you hear one word trumped forth of those who have labored hard, lived on raw pork and hard bread for months, and found nothing (and these are many), or of the poor fellow who, coming to the mines with high hopes, is stricken by disease before he strikes a blow, when neither aid nor medicine, or the shelter of a tent even, can be rendered, and he dies, with no “pitying eye to see, no succoring arm to save,” unheeded and unknown? I had not been in the mines an hour before I loaned my buffalo skin and blanket to two poor fellows lying sick

with flux and fever, without any shelter over them and a heavy rain coming on. One died soon; the other got better, had a relapse and died afterwards. When bars are formed in the mountain streams, they are worked often advantageously, and when the road to them is once made, men rush in and occupy them without the exposure of the first explorer. But when the bar is worked out, a general move takes place, and men then set out to hunt new locations, either by prospecting or going to other known bars. Different districts have different regulations as to the quantity of ground a man may occupy. It is a general rule, however, if he dams the river and takes the water out by a race, he is entitled to all the ground he drains in the bed; and although I have not heard of any material difficulty, if another party should interfere or attempt to drive him off, he would be protected by the other companies near. There is an association for that purpose on the South Fork, where I am now settled. There are three forks to Feather River: the North Fork, which heads over two hundred miles from its confluence with the Sacramento; the Middle Fork, rising in the mountains nearly east; and the South Fork, the smallest of the three branches, which heads in a southeast direction, has a course of from sixty to eighty miles. They all unite within six miles of each other, and after passing the mountains to the Valley, form a beautiful stream, navigable for boats of four or five tons in an ordinary stage of water. It is up the Middle and South Fork that the crowds are now rushing. Last fall, there was scarcely twenty men at work on this branch, and two months ago hardly a cabin along the river. Now, a cabin is built every mile and every bar located, and preparations are going on by digging races and commencing dams to work the bed of the river in the spring. What the ultimate success of the hardy adventures will be, can only be determined on trial. I was fortunate enough to secure an interest in two bars, but it was only by worse exposure than I have described above. With a load of blankets and provisions on my back, and prospecting tools in my hands, I was gone a week, during which it rained constantly night and day, except the first day, and our company of nine lay out without shelter, living on raw pork and bread, keeping a keen look-out for Indians, passing cañons, climbing rocks, with many such pleasant incidents. We penetrated up the 59 mountains about fifty miles, and the Lord only knows how much farther we should have gone had our provisions held out; but stomachs are stubborn things to contend with, and we were finally compelled, by “stress of weather and short allowance,” to face about and made tracks for the settlements, tying our girths pretty tight about us on the last day to keep our stomachs quiet.

The result of our wild goose chase was a knowledge of the country, a discovery of dry diggings on the mountain, a good track for a road, and the location of two bars on the river. And then to take possession of our bars before anybody else, a cabin must be built, provisions got up over a track that a mule could hardly walk. More labor, more exposure; but " *veni, vidi, vici*." We took our rations again, and axes, and set out. The logs were cut and rolled together, shingles split out of the beautiful pine and put on the roof, a large fireplace and chimney built, stools, shelves, bedsteads, and door made, &c., &c., all of which occupied about ten days, and it rained most of the time, while two more of the company were engaged in getting up provisions. At last we are comfortably settled in the best quarters which I have found in California, with enough to eat, such as it is, a good roof over us, and any amount of hard work before us, and perhaps not a dollar in either bar to repay our toil, or it may be a fortune. But we shall try. "To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile, Assiduously wait upon her; And gather *gold* by every wile That's justified by"—confounded hard work.*

The last line doesn't rhyme exactly, but it's "true as preaching." So you see an inkling of life in the mines, though the half is not told. There is one thing I beg leave to speak of, and that is the perfect equality which reigns with us. Sparta could not hold a candle to it. The judge, the ex-member of Congress, the lawyer, the merchant, the farmer, the mechanic, the sailor, the soldier, the scholar, all grades, shades and classes, "mingle, mingle, mingle," and you would as often take the dunce for the judge, as the judge for himself. The height of fashion is to cook your own grub and carry your own basket on your back, while your holiday suit, like my own, is— *mem*.—a soiled buckskin coat, a tattered vest, pants like Noah's ark, with a multitude of windows and a large doorway in the seat, socks with tops but no bottoms, cowhide boots with your toes peeping out like frogs to view the weather, while this image of our Maker is topped out with a hat that looks as if it had had the ague since it was first made, for its rags and tatters seem to have conned the beggar's petition by heart—

Oh, pity the sorrows of a poor old—hat,

while—but look in that pocket looking-glass—you haven't shaved for the last three months. No soap is no excuse; you might have singed it off with a burning pine knot.

Cf. Burns, Epistle to a Young Friend.

Now, Mr. Editor, if you have any doubt of the truth of this description of a miner's appearance, just come and see for yourself, and I will wager my hat (and if I lose it I shall have none at all) against a year's subscription to the *True Delta* that you will give it up. The man after all may have a rough exterior, but a good, true, honest heart within. I would like to give you a fine example of this if it came within the limits and design of this communication. Below the Middle Fork the rock is trachyte, standing vertically, but above, on the South Fork, it suddenly changes to granite, partially decomposed, syenite, and large fragments of quartz, which have evidently been exposed to intense heat, and frequently on the hillsides and mountain tops the ground is covered with fine particles of decomposed granite. Occasionally we find quartz crystals, though not as clear as those of the quartz formations in the States, but I have found none of the peculiar debris which accompanies the black traprock within the range of the Sierra Nevada. Yellow and black mica are plentiful, and in some places thin slabs of isinglass. This granite formation continued as high up as I penetrated, and apparently the higher up, the harder and more compact the rock became. I have not found a single petrifaction on the river.

As for the future prospects of California, I say nothing. I have here briefly described it as I found it. Commercially, and for its mines, it may prove a valuable acquisition; as an agricultural country, it cannot amount to much. At present it is in the hands of speculators and of men holding large tracts under Mexican grants, and, for a time, litigations and law-suits must ensue, and it will be a paradise for lawyers. That men should hold from ten to a hundred leagues of land is unreasonable, and no free country can flourish while nearly all the best soil is in the hands of so few individuals. But your own judgment is probably better than mine in this respect, and I leave it.

If a man has health and will work hard, he can make money here now. In short, he may get rich soon, or he may find an early death. One thing is certain, hardship and privation if he succeeds, and probably the same if he fails. A.D.

13. Dawlytown, California, April 4, 1850.*

ON MY return from the mountains, I found the water too high for mining operations, and we probably shall be unable to do but little before the 1st of June, when the rains are over and the snows melted. And here is one of the drawbacks upon mining. During the winter, no man can work for the rains, and on the streams the water continues so high from melting snows and spring rains that, on Feather River at least, little or nothing can be done till June. In August, the intense heat of the sun drives the miners from the ravines, so that really about four months of the year only can be taken as a *maximum* for mining on the rivers.

True Delta, June 9, 1850. Actually this letter must have been written at Marysville, according to the fourth paragraph.

As high as this stream is worked, it is chiefly done by throwing dams across at the head of bars, and the water is turned from its bed through a race, and the bed of the stream is then worked out. I do not know of a single bar for forty miles up from the Valley, that is not claimed by companies who have their races dug and who will put in their dams as soon as the water falls sufficiently. Hitherto, the common rocker has been in general use, but now quicksilver machines are introduced and, by another season, will most probably supersede the old cradle. Little or nothing is lost by these machines, and the results have sometimes been astonishing, even on bars which have been worked over by the old rocker. A new and expeditious mode of building dams has been recently introduced which promises much success. It is simply filling bags with sand and laying them on each other, breaking joints like laying up bricks in a wall. They become compact and shut out the water completely, while an efficient dam can be built in a few hours.

As a general thing, the health of those who remained in the mines during the winter is good, and those who survived the sickness and exposure of last fall are in robust health. Still, whether they will be able to stand the labor and intense heat of summer remains to be seen. Provisions are now obtained in the mines with much less difficulty than they were last fall, and in greater variety, so that the meagre diet of the miners can be replaced by that more healthful. Trading establishments keep pace with the crowds forcing their way into the mountain recesses, and competition is rapidly reducing the exorbitant prices which were common last fall. Still prices are high. Labor in the mines is worth from ten to twelve dollars per day; a single meal, not only in the mountains but in the

Valley generally, 62 is $1.50. New towns are springing up at points convenient to the mines, and speculations in town lots with dubious titles are as rife as they were at home in 1836.

High water preventing any mining operations, I came down to this place a few days ago, where I shall remain until the streams are low enough to work in the mines. In November last, there was but a single adobe house here. Now there is a town with a population of a thousand souls, an active, busy stirring place, at the mouth of the Yuba, with a fleet of whale boats, small schooners, and, during the floods, daily steamboats, discharging cargoes on the levee.* But for some of the *unique* California buildings, wood and cloth combined, and the costume and peculiar habits of the citizens, you might well fancy yourself still at home in the "land o' the leal."

This could only be Marysville. Cf. *Across the Plains*, 127-128.

One of the peculiar concomitants of a town in Alta California is gambling. The most spacious tents and halls are rather gorgeously fitted up, decorated with pictures, and at one end a splendid bar affords the means of giving courage to the unsophisticated, and enables him to lose in a few moments the hard earnings of months of toil and privations, while around the room rows of tables stand, with piles of money, with various games to "take the stranger in." At some of the tables, Mexican women preside at *monte*, and they always get a crowd around them. I was taken a little aback yesterday at seeing a young woman perambulating the streets in men's attire. I was told she was married. It is certain she has a marvelous penchant for wearing the breeches, and her husband might as well assume petticoats at once. It is not uncommon to see Mexican women astride of horses, and they ride well too. We do not grow fastidious in such matters, after living among Indians who have worn Adam and Eve's morning dresses all their lives. As brandy, ale, wine, cider, &c., cost only two bits a drink now, any fool can afford to drink, and you would be astonished at the number of such fools among us. "E'en ministers ha' been ken'd At times a rousing whid to vend, An nail't wi' scripture,"*

and I was rather more amused than edified last Sunday by hearing a reverend gentleman of the Methodist persuasion holding forth the sublime truths of Sacred Writ from a pile of boards in the public square and preaching the necessity of regeneration. He kept a drinking house in one

of the back streets, and could at any time give practical evidence of the power of spirit. After all this strange medley of right and wrong, of what we have been taught to look on as good or bad, the principle of law and order still exists, and crime, 63 aggression or violent outbreaks are as unusual as in the States; and I do not doubt that, in the course of time, future emigrations, as well as the early habits of those now here, will give tone to society in California, and out of this chaos a different state of things will be produced.

Cf. Burns, *Death and Doctor Hornbook*. A “whid” is a lie.

A large yield from the mines is anticipated the present season, and this is justly predicated upon two reasons. There are many more engaged in mining, and the work is carried on more scientifically with the use of quicksilver. You cannot judge of the amount of gold raised here by quotations from arrivals in the United States. Large amounts go to Oregon, the Sandwich Islands, Mexico, South America, Europe, and even China, of which you receive no advices.

That we are advancing in the science of law, especially for the punishment of offenders, you will readily acknowledge from one of the incidents of the day. Last night, one of the gambling houses of this town was *slit* through with a knife, and some thieves entered and stole a trunk belonging to the proprietor, containing a thousand dollars. This morning, one of the thieves offered a pistol for sale that was in the trunk, which led to his detection and that of an accomplice. A grand jury was summoned, and one of the culprits plead guilty. A true bill was found against both, and a petit jury was impanelled forthwith before the alcalde. The tide of fortune was against the culprits, and they were sentenced each to receive one hundred lashes on the bare back, and, if found in town in the morning, a fine of a thousand dollars and two years' labor in the chain gang of San Francisco. Sentence was immediately executed. They were tied to a tree, their backs laid bare, and a brawny arm soon paid them the penalty of dishonesty, much to the edification of a large throng of bystanders in the public square. One of them appeared penitent and was probably young in crime; the other, when his back was bared, showed indubitable proof of a former acquaintance with the cat and no doubt was an old offender. On their discharge, they disappeared in the crowd and can now go and try their light-fingered propensity in some other community. But a small portion of the money was recovered. As there are no prisons, this is the only way of punishment, and this

speedy justice will not be without its effects upon others. Having an opportunity of sending this to Sacramento, I am writing hurriedly. A. D.

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14. Oleepa, May 8, 1850.*

I WAS most highly gratified a few days since by receiving a letter from you, which gave me more news from home than I had received in all before. Indeed, the mails seem tired of persecuting me any longer, for within the last two months I have received (count with your fingers so that you will make no mistake) three letters from my wife dated severally August 25, October 21, January 12—one from my sister,* December 2, one from Colonel Morgan of New York,* December 18, and you of February 4—all but the first one and Colonel Morgan's came within the last two days, and I have read and reread them so often that I have committed them to memory to serve until I strike another lead.—Well, this is the merry month of May—hot enough to roast eggs—men. The hens in this country don't lay—'cause there isn't any. Eggs are brought by sea from Acapulco at six dollars per dozen. I wish some Yankee would establish a manufactory here, so as to reduce the price a little. But speaking of May, it reminds me of where I was a year ago, sailing by point of 65 compass on the plains between the two Nemahas,* and by this time thousands of our fellow citizens have commenced their long and weary route of suffering towards this land of distress, sickness, and death, for in few words, such will be the inevitable fate of many who will cross the plains. So many reminiscences of my trials present themselves so vividly to my imagination, that I can scarcely write at all, so ardently do I desire to be with them to tell them how to avoid the difficulties and suffering which we encountered, and much may be avoided if they knew how.
In one of my communications to you, I spoke of the pocket map which you presented me on my leaving Ottawa, but from a word dropped in your letter, I conclude you never received it.—It was a copy of Fremont's,* most conveniently arranged in sections, so that by turning a leaf two or three days' travel lay before us. We found it of infinite use. The distances were accurately laid down, and the notes and remarks were perfectly correct. Many trains were benefited, and something of the kind would be very useful to emigrants. Ours was only on this route to sixty miles west of Fort

Hall, but now a new and better route is found from Bear Springs which saves about an hundred miles' travel, leaving Fort Hall to the north. It seems as if a man may live years in a few months in this country, so many are the changes and the scenes which he goes through. Every transit from the mountains to the Valley, or from the Valley to the mountains, brings its adventures. If I could detail but a small portion of the experience of travelers to this country, it would form as interesting and exciting a book of the kind as ever was published.

Free Trader, July 6, 1850. Oleepa was an Indian village on the Feather River one half mile south of Yateston. *Across the Plains*, 127-128.

Harriett Delano (b. 1797), after whom he apparently named his daughter Harriet. In “Old Block at Home” he refers to his reunion with his “only sister,” a grandmother and widow, at Aurora, but her married name does not appear. His parents had eleven children; but only four attained middle age, apparently—Austin, Harriett, Mortimer Frederick, and Alonzo. *Pen-Knife Sketches*, 57-58; Joel A. Delano, *Genealogy*, 408.

Probably Edwin B. Morgan (1806-1881), of Aurora, one of the original officers of Wells, Fargo and Company, with which Delano was later associated.

The Little Nemaha River and the North Fork of the Nemaha River, in present-day Nebraska. Cf. p. 23.

John Charles Fremont, *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-'44* (Washington, 1845). Maps face pp. 132, 246. This was the most popular overland guide.

Colonel Taylor, of St. Louis, in coming out last season with a part of his company, left their train and started for California. They lost their horses, and in an attempt to make a cut-off, got lost in the Wind River Mountains in August, where the snow was ten feet deep. For many days they had no provisions, only what they killed and that was but little, and just as the last ray of hope was departing, and they had concluded that death was inevitable, they regained the road and succeeded in getting through by walking fifteen hundred miles.

My neighbor, T. E. Gray,* came through Central America on foot. On the Pacific he took a whaleboat and put to sea, was once washed overboard in a storm, but arrived safely in San Francisco in twenty-seven days. Among the unfortunate sufferers who were 66 caught in the November snows of the last emigration was a gentleman who told me that, in a desperate attempt to reach the settlement, he took his knapsack and started to walk in about two hundred miles. In about three days his provisions were all gone but one day's ration of flour and a small piece of bacon. He overtooka family where there were three women and three or four little children who had not a mouthful to eat, and the men had gone out to seek aid. Their cattle had all died and they were left

helpless. With a self-denial and generosity that few can fully appreciate but those who have seen such things, he gave all his provisions to the helpless and starving sufferers, and walked three days in snow knee-deep, without food himself, before he ate anything. The family were rescued by the Government relief train.* But such things are so common that they have ceased to be a subject of conversation.

Of Florida. He was a passenger on the steamer *Galveston*, which sailed from New Orleans for Panama on February 2, 1849. Haskins, *Argonauts of California*, 481.
U.S. military authorities in California sent troops eastward with supplies in the winters of 1849-1850. Bancroft, *History of California*, VI, 154.

A rather droll meeting happened to me last fall among hundreds of others. During my last trip to Sacramento City just before the rains set in, I was driving my ox team in company with two other teams over a dry arid plain, without grass or water—night was approaching, and no sign of a camping ground appeared, and tired and jaded, suffering alike with hunger and thirst, we were anxiously looking round for a resting place for the night. Directly an old man overtook us, driving a smart span of mules in a light wagon, and we inquired where we should find grass and water. "About four miles from this," he replied courteously. "I camped there on my way down, and it is the only place you will find.—It will be after dark before you reach it. I will drive on, kindle a fire, and you will see it when you get to it—it is about half a mile off the road, but you will see my fire." He drove on and we followed slowly. When we came in sight we found that he had been as good as his word, for there was a bright fire, and on driving up we found our friend cooking his supper. We soon joined him in this agreeable operation, and soon we were amused at his wit and originality. Though rough in his appearance and somewhat *Californian* in his language, we soon saw he was a well-educated man and a gentleman. After spending the evening quite agreeably in story-telling and discussing various topics, we spread our blankets on the ground and turned in, without once inquiring where each other was from. While we were breakfasting next morning, the old gentleman happened to drop a remark about Indiana. "Are you from Indiana?" I interrogated. "Yes." "What part of it?" "O, from down on the Wabash where they have the ague so hard that it shakes the feathers off all the chickens." A sort of recollection flashed through my mind like lightning.—"Is your name Patrick?" "Yes"—said he, looking up.—"Dr. Sceptre 67 Patrick, from Terre Haute?"*

continued I. “Yes, that is my name—who the d—l are you?” “You were once a student of my father —he was Dr. Frederick Delano.”* “My God, is it possible?—and you—youmust be A—!” Our knives and our breakfast dropped from our hands instantly, and they were clutched in the warm grasp of “auld lang syne.” I had not seen him for sixteen years—“and now, Patrick, situated as you were at home, with every comfort about you, with your reputation and circumstances, what sent you on this wild chase to California?” He had been a member of the Legislature and a somewhat prominent man at home. “Why, I'll tell you—my health was very poor, and I thought the exercise, excitement, and change of air might be beneficial, and so it has, but I like to have died on the road.” “How so?” “Why, I had the cholera, and came within an ace of slipping my wind. I was taken suddenly and most severely, and there was not a man near me who understood dealing out a dose of medicine, except our d—d fool of a pepper doctor. I was vomiting, purging, and suffering all the pain of infernal regions, when I told them to give me a large dose of calomel, opium and camphor, and not to count the grains either. But the pepper doctor urged me to take a dose of No. 6 —. ‘Go to the d—l with your No. 6; give me the calomel, and quick too, or I am a dead man.’ But the fool kept talking about his No. 6—No. 6 all the while, till finally to satisfy him, and at the same time while I was writhing in agony, I told him to pour it down me. He immediately turned out a double dose, and I took it. Then I thought I should die. The remedy was worse than the disease, and I thought my insides were all on fire, and I roared out for water, ‘water, water, for God's sake, or I *shall die*.’ But there was not a drop of water to be had and all were much alarmed, but I did not throw the medicine up. ‘Well, give me something—I'm burning up—give me brandy, fire, or turpentine, anything.’ The doctor jumped to the brandy jug and poured out half a glass full, and before I knew it I had swallowed nearly all of that, but it was only adding fuel to flame, for the poor frightened devil had made a mistake in the jug and poured out another quadruple dose of No. 6. Now I thought I was gone sure, but it stuck, and stopped my vomiting, and then he was willing to give me my medicine, and that stuck. In the course of an hour or so it operated, and the disease was checked, and I got well.” Our time was spent, and we parted, like the “two dogs resolved to meet some other day.”*

Dr. Sceptre (or Septer) Patrick (1784 or 1785-1859). Born in Indiana, he died in Sacramento. Sacramento *Union*, July 2, 1859.

D. 1825. Joel A. Delano, *Genealogy*, 408.
Burns, *The Twa Dogs*.

I am located for the present in the fine flourishing town of Oleepa, at the head of steamboat navigation on Feather River. Our fine and 68 populous town consists of a cloth store, over which I am the presiding genius (Genius of the Lamp, *vamos,* for I am here), one cloth hotel about opening, under the direction of Mr. Gray, aforesaid from Florida, and two Indian ranchos composed of about four hundred Indians, most of whom, disdaining Parisian fashions, are dressed in nature's costume.* Were it not for the mosquitoes, this would be a very convenient dress for the climate, where modesty is of no account. There are about fifty naked wretches sitting on the ground in front of my building, in the sun, laughing, singing, and taking comfort, all playing the same tune and beating time with their hands on their bodies, for it is slap, slap, slap, as the tormenting mosquitoes bore into their naked, copper-colored hides. It will be in June before the water will be low enough to do anything in the mines, and then I shall shoulder “de shubble and de hoe” and make tracks for the mountains. Since my sickness of last fall and winter, the climate seems to agree with me, and it may eventually prove best suited for my constitution. There has been another great fire in San Francisco. It is estimated that from five to ten million dollars' worth of property has been destroyed.*

Maidu Indians. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, 391-441.
This was the second “great” San Francisco fire, on May 4, 1850. Soulé *et al., Annals*, 274.

The lower towns are improving rapidly in the arts of civilization. San Francisco, Sacramento, &c., &c., are graced with theatres, celebrated singers and dancers, model artists, &c.—admittance two dollars, front seats reserved for the ladies. Fudge—let'em come this way and they can see Indian dances, and naked men, women, and children by the quantity for nothing, with a large sprinkle of grizzly bears, black wolves, and coyotes, with deer, elk and antelopes, rats, mice, and ground squirrels thrown into the bargain. So far from its being a novelty we do not notice them. I have not seen many of the Ottawa boys lately. I saw Joseph Reddick* not long since. He has a first-rate claim on the Middle Fork of Feather River, and will do well. Mr. Fredenburg and B.K. Thorn are near Mr. Green, all doing a fair business. Armstrong* is at Long's Bar, on the river, with good

prospects before him. Indeed, those who are now well and have secured claims cannot fail of meeting with fair success. Gold is found in large quantities in the Cascade Mountains, towards Oregon, and a strong current is setting that way, but it is a horrid country of sharp, broken and rugged mountains. McNeil is with me, one of the best men in the world. Mr. Pope is *doing well* on the Yuba. 69 He is a good and honest man, deserving success. Smith and Brown have a bakery at Yuba City.—I have not heard one word from Dr. Hall* since last fall—he richly deserves the best fortune.—Mr. Rood has a grocery at Eliza, two miles below Marysville—says he is doing well. Young Loring* has a claim about five miles above my upper one in a rich district. Mr. Bacon* and Dan. Stadden are dead, and it is rumored that Captain Reed was drowned a few weeks ago in Feather River.* This is about the only news I am possessed of with regard to our boys—we have all got places and are ready to go to work as soon as the floods permit.

Of Ottawa, a son of William Reddick. He was a soldier in the Mexican War and died in California in 1870. *Ottawa*: *Old and New*, 22.
Probably one of the seven sons of Joseph Armstrong, of Ottawa: John S., born 1810; George W., 1812; William E., 1814; Joel W., 1816; Jeremiah R., 1818; Perry A., 18238 and Isaiah J., 1829. *Ibid*., 10.
Dr. Josiah Hall, of Ottawa. A physician and blacksmith, and a Patriarch of the Sons of Temperance, he died at Ottawa in 1876. *Ibid*., 29-30.
Thomas Loring, of Ottawa. He is reported as being on the Feather River in February, 1850. *Free Trader*, April 13, 1850.
James Bacon, of Ottawa, “died of congestive chills at Weaverville” early in 1850. *Free Trader*, April 13, 1850. This was unfounded. Cf. p. 42.

15. Oleepa, May 12th, 1850.*

MY PRESENT communication will be a chapter on the Indians. I hesitated whether I would expose one of Colonel Grant's mountain rambles, together with Captain King's adventure,* but I finally concluded to leave persons and adventures until my next. My opportunity of seeing the dark-skinned aborigines has been somewhat extended within a few months, and this may diversify the thousand and one California communications with which we are boring our Atlantic brethren. I am at present living in immediate proximity of two large Indian villages, where the night revels of these poor savages, together with the howling of the coyote, are my evening lullaby, while during the day I am waited on or stared at as a great “medicine man” by a gaping crowd of credulous

Indians. God help my practice as a physician. Beyond putting a plaster (if I have it) on a sore toe, or offering a bottle of hartshorn to a fainting person, my practice does not extend, and the veriest pepper quack in the land might blush to own me as one of the faculty. I found the chief (Oleepa) sitting by his fire one night, holding his head with his hand, evidently suffering with pain. On examination, I found a slight swelling just back and a little below his ear. I saw at once it 70 was simply a slight inflammation, which would produce suppuration unless it could be reduced. I had scarcely any medicines with me, but I knew that opodeldoc was good for horseflesh, and I thought it might do for Indians; so I rubbed a little on it, gave him a pill of opium, and sent him to bed. In two days the swelling was gone and the chief well, and my credit as "high as the skies" as a "medicine man;" and I have a full run of practice, which I extend *free gratis for nothing*. One poor devil came to me with a sore skin. Having no Peleg White or Jew David* by me, I washed it clean with Castile soap, put a thin piece of fat bacon on a rag and bound it on the happy Indian's leg, and told him he would be well in three sleeps. It would have got well anyhow. Bacon is good for the inside of a white man, so I though it *might* do outside on an Indian. But I will brag no more of my medical talents until I invent some patent medicine, and then I will send you any quantity of Indian certificates to prove that a man will never need employ me but once, for I shall kill him the first time. I have had considerable curiosity in finding out their customs and for this purpose have been a good deal among them. Their houses resemble coal pits, being a framework within an excavation in the ground and the dirt thrown over it, a hole being left in the top for the smoke to go out, and another about two feet square at the bottom to serve as a door: this is by a passage four or five feet long, and it is close work to get in by crawling on your hands and knees. Once in, they are quite capacious, but dingy with smoke, and filthy. I have frequently crawled in and sat by their fires in the cool evenings, and I have always been well treated, and at any time when they have been eating, was always invited to a share. Their bread is made of acorns pounded fine and dried, and they make a cake of a kind of grass by boiling it first, then working it over with their hands into a pulpy substance, flattening it out and drying it over their fires. Both are very palatable, aside from their dirty mode of preparing it. Their mode of cooking the beautiful salmon caught here makes them delicious; it is simply by laying heated stones upon them until they are thoroughly cooked. I like them better than any other mode I ever tried. Men and women generally wear their

hair short, shaved quite close on the top of the head. I have been amused at their mode of cutting hair; sometimes they burn it off with a coal and sometimes turn it over a flat stick and saw it off with the edge of a clam shell.

True Delta, July 17, 1850.
Cf. pp. 77-80.
"Jew David, or Hebrew Plaster, is the only reliable remedy for *Rheumatism*, *Lame Backs or Sides*, *Spinal Disease*, *White Swelling*, *Hard Tumors*, *Corns*, &c." Advertisement in the Boonville (Missouri) *Observer*, October 3, 1850. The functions of Peleg White were probably similar.

In intelligence, they are far behind the Indians east of the Rocky Mountains. Unless they have been employed by the whites so as to obtain clothes, they go naked, the men entirely so, and the women wear only a short apron of grass before them.

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They have some idea of a Superior Being or Spirit greater than themselves, but have few, if any, religious ceremonies. The moon is an object of veneration, and they occasionally give her a dance offering. They are fond of dancing and often indulge in it without any other visible object than that of pleasure. Their music is a monotonous cadence of guttural sounds to which they keep time with their feet. It is somewhat singular that different *rancherías,* though only four and five miles apart, speak different dialects, though there appears to be a common means or general language of communication among the different tribes.

Each village has its separate chief whose government is of the most liberal, patriarchal kind. Different tribes have different customs: in their burials, some burn their dead, some bury them extended at full length, covering them with skins or sticks, then throwing in dirt; while others bend the body and legs together in a sitting posture, winding them up tightly with cords, and then place them into holes in the ground, putting in water, provisions, and little mementos of affection to serve them on their way to the land of spirits.

An affecting anecdote was related me by an eyewitness of a burial among one of the mountain tribes. Mr. Johnson, late proprietor of the ranch which bears his name on Bear River,* brought up a boy and girl from childhood. They were educated as well as the circumstances of the country would

allow, and while the girl was instructed in the domestic arts, the boy was learned in the science of agriculture. Both were trusty, and Mr. Johnson was much attached to them. In the course of time they arrived to a marriageable age, and the boy wanted a wife. Mr. Johnson proposed that he should take the girl, which being perfectly agreeable to their inclination, they were married. In a year or two the boy was taken sick and died. Mr. J. desired to have a somewhat expensive funeral to testify his regard for his adopted children, but the poor girl begged him to let her bury her beloved husband beside the bones of her father in the hills. Of course he at once consented, and he with all his domestics and several friends escorted the body to the mountains, where they were met by the rude mountaineers with every demonstration of sorrow, who placed the body on a pile and set fire to it. They then began to dance around it with songs of lamentation, each casting into the flames some precious offering, while the widow stripped herself completely of her civilized garments, threw them into the fire, and Mr. Johnson's domestics each pulled off their new hats, which he had just paid eighteen dollars apiece for, and cast them on 72 the burning pile of the deceased fellow and friend. When all was consumed, the Indians gathered up the ashes in their hands and scattered them to the winds.

William Johnson, a native of Boston and mate of the ship *Alciope*, came to California in 1841. Four years later he purchased the Gutierrez rancho on the Bear River. About 1852 “he either died or went to the Sandwich Islands.” Bancroft, *History of California*, IV, 694

When the ceremony was concluded, Mr. Johnson told the girl that her mule was ready and they would return, but she refused to go: “My husband, my heart, is dead; I will stay in the mountains with him; I will watch his ashes on the hills and his spirit will be with me; I am an Indian now; I love you, my father, but I will go no more to the Valley; I will be an Indian till I die.” It was in vain that she was promised clothes, a life of ease and comfort and the wants of savage life exhibited to her. She would not go. “Her heart was here now. His bones were with her father's. Hers should be with his.” She assumed the usual grass apron worn by the squaws and remains with them now.

Their marriage customs vary in different tribes. Some buy their wives of their parents. Some steal them from other tribes, while some have a kind of hide-and-go-seek game. The lover asks the parents for their daughter. They tell him if he can find her three times she is his. In the meantime she secretes herself and the young man begins the search. If he finds her twice in succession, she is

his. If he fails the third time, some weeks of probation is required before he ia allowed another trial. They are very affectionate and kind to each other, sharing gifts freely. I have often tested this. One day two Indians came to my tent and I gave one of them a small cracker. He immediately broke it and gave half to his companion. I employed one for a day or two and at noon took him home to dinner, which I gave him on a plate by himself. In the meantime two other Indians came up and commenced eating with him as a matter of course, and the three dispatched the dinner of one, and all appeared to be perfectly satisfied with the arrangement.

They seem to have no idea of chastity, but they are so abominably filthy that their appearance excites disgust rather than passion. Still some of the old settlers use the women as wives and become attached to them.

Gambling is a universal propensity. They play a game with short sticks cut equal lengths, a kind of odd-and-even game, and they frequently stake all their valuables, which they win or lose with perfect apparent indifference. An Indian may be loaded with strings of beads suspended from his naked neck today, and tomorrow they may be the property of, and won by, another. Notwithstanding their affection for each other, they readily part with their children. In passing through one of the villages a day or two since, I noticed a fine plump little fellow tugging lustily at its mother's breast. I stopped and playfully patted the child upon its cheek. Instantly a tall, naked Indian who was basking in the sun on top of his mud castle, sprang up and offered me the child for a handkerchief which 73 was tied around my shoulders. I laughed and told him the baby was too small; I could put it in my pockets; but when he could run about I would trade. They laughed in turn and told me he would then be worth more.

They beg without scruple or shame. A few days since I was sitting among a crowd, when one of them asked me for my handkerchief. He wanted it to wear on his head.

“O, no!” I told him. “I cannot spare it—I want it to wipe my nose with.” “Ugh! you have a hat (pointing to mine) and I have none. You can blow your nose as I do,” and suiting the action to the word, turned a triumphant look upon me, as much as to say, “I have learned you something, old

fellow," and the whole crowd laughed merrily at my ignorance. What a barbarian I am. Well, my education must be my excuse. There are many other incidents to illustrate Indian character but it would make too long a letter, and I will close by a single anecdote illustrating their credulity, if my medical practice is not sufficient. Extract from my Journal:

"January 30.

—The second day after McNeil and I reached ou cabin,* our Indian friends returned. It was a cold, rainy, gusty day, and they came naked into our cabin, the rain dripping from their hair, while they drew near the fire shivering with cold. We had no particular objection to their visit, only on account of their propensity for stealing, which with them is no crime, and as they might come when we were absent or busily at work on our race, and take what they chose from the cabin, we thought it was best to get rid of them quietly, and I tried their credulity for the occasion. I told them that I was a conjurer, that I came from the rising sun and had control over the elements. Occasionally a gust of wind and rain came that was terrific, and the smoke drove down the chimney enough to suffocate us. I took advantage of the approach of these guests to beckon up the chimney, which was often followed by a ready response from the god of the storm, and a severe gust followed. Then I examined their heads phrenologically (I understand that science about as well as medicine). This excited them, and they frequently enquired if it was *wano* (good)? "Yes," I replied, "it was good," though they were evidently uneasy. At length after a few manipulations of animal magnetism, and occasional gyrations towards the chimney as each gust approached, I sat down with a grave face and began to sketch their likenesses on a smooth board. They watched me closely till they began to see something of a resemblance to themselves, now and then looking at each other in apparent alarm, when a strong gust coming which instantly filled the room with smoke, Mac suddenly jumped up and rushed to the door, and opening it, looked out to see if any goblins answered my summons. No sooner was the door opened, than our Indian friends started to their 74 feet and bolted outright, preferring to "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm"* rather than stay longer in the den of a monster who called the storm from the clouds and took their spirits from themselves and made them fast to the board. We have not seen them since.

At Ottawa Bar.
Shakespeare, *King Lear*, III, iv, 29.

I had the good fortune to see a copy of the California edition of the *True Delta*, which Dr. Angle, of the Angle and Company's Express, gave me.* I noticed a copy from a Springfield, Illinois, paper of a horrid circumstance said to have occurred in the train of Captain Green, of Fox River, Illinois, of his son* who killed a squaw and who was afterwards given up and flayed alive by the Indians in presence of his father and the company. It is a sheer fabrication from beginning to end. I came nearly all the way in that train and have seen them since my arrival here. In the first place, young Green neither killed a squaw nor had any difficulty with the Indians. In the next place, if he had, that company, *nor no other which crossed the plains last season*, would have given a man up to the tender mercies of the Indians; they would all have fought till they died. And in the last place, any man who knows old Mr. Green knows that he has grit enough to stand as long as a man can stand against any body of Indians alive. He is an old Indian-fighter, and you may be assured no son or friends of his would be skinned before his eyes while he could pull a trigger or wield a knife. They are now piling up the golden rocks in the mountains. Water still too high to work in the mines and probably will be till June.

Dr. M. B. Angle (c. 1820-1865), of Illinois. He came overland with Delano and lent him two hundred dollars. He was for several years president of the Pacific Medical College (the first medical school in California), founded in San Francisco by the College of the Pacific about 1858. He died at Redding. *Across the Plains*, 27, 52, 109; San Francisco *Alta California*, October 1, 1865; Morse, *First History of Sacrament*, 14.
Géorge Green. Cf. p. 112.

Truly yours,

A.

16. Yateston, June 14, 1850.*

DID YOU ever hear of Jim Beckwith?* There is a class of men in California whose adventures, if written out, would equal, if not surpass the works of fiction. For many years living in the

mountains, enduring all the privations and suffering incident to such a life, from choice, forsaking the comforts of a civilized land to gain a scanty and precarious living among savages—these men have been awakened to a desire of procuring wealth by the universal attraction of California, and have emerged from their bleak and desolate hills among the Rocky Mountains, to form an atom of the thousands crowding here for gold; and of this bold, determined and fearless class is Jim Beckwith. He is a free mulatto from Missouri, originally. By a combination of circumstances he found himself a mountaineer and the chief of the Crow Nation, among the Black Hills, high up in the vicinity of the North Platte.

True Delta, June 26, 1850. Yateston was named for Captain John Yates, an Englishman by birth who came to California from Mazatlan in 1842 and was employed by Sutter as master of his launch. Yates was "second to have been owner of land in the Chico region," 1846-1847. In 1851 he went to the Sandwich Islands, where he was living in 1872. Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 782; *Across the Plains*, 120, 127-128.
James P. Beckwourth (1798-c. 1867), "hunter, squaw-man, raconteur." Born in Virginia of a mulatto mother and a white father, he went with William H. Ashley and Andrew Henry on their famous exploring expedition of 1823 and with Ashley to the Rocky Mountains in the winter of 1824-1825. He married a succession of Indian maidens. In 1844 he settled in California, where he discovered the low-altitude pass over the Sierra which bears his name. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

According to the custom of Indians who are friendly with each other, Jim had a wife among the Blackfeet as well as among the Crows. Being out once upon some wild excursion, he met a party of Blackfeet going to war with some neighboring tribe; and at their solicitation, he joined them. They were victorious and returned with a number of scalps; among them was that of a mountaineer whom some of the Indians had killed. Jim took this opportunity to go and see his wife among the Blackfeet, and a great festival was held in their large town to celebrate their victory. In the lodge which Jim's wife occupied were three or four French traders, with their goods, whose curiosity led them to the door of the lodge to witness the antics of the Indians, while Jim sat moodily by a small fire inside, leaning his head in his hands and holding no communion with the noisy and reckless throng without. Raising his eyes he observed the curiosity of the Frenchmen who were gazing at the crowd, and he addressed them, "Why do you stand looking upon that scene?"

"Because we want to see them dance," they replied.

“Do you not know that the scalp of a white man is among them and can you look coolly on and see them rejoice over his death? I 76 never did,” and he added vehemently, “I never will. If you know what is best for you, come and sit down with me.”

They came in, for they knew he was not to be trifled with, but inquired, “If you dislike it, why do you let your squaw dance with them?”

“Is my squaw there?” “Yes, and she is the best dancer among them.” Without making a reply he arose and strode into the crowd, and seizing his wife, forcibly dragged her into the tent. “Now do your duty—go and bring me some water.” The reply of the irritated squaw was characteristic of a freeborn woman. “I am no slave—if you have one, send her.” Without reply, Jim seized his hatchet and clove her skull, and she fell a lifeless corpse before him. Turning to the whites, with the utmost coolness he observed, “Now you must fight or die; you'll soon hear,” and he took down his rifle, knife, pistols and tomahawk, and calmly set down by the fire.

In the meantime, two or three women who witnessed the occurrence ran out screaming and soon explained the state of affairs within. In a moment the yelling orgies without ceased—there was an appalling stillness which contrasted strangely with the horrid din that had shaken the ground. “Aha!” ejaculated Jim, “do you hear that?” Directly the thunder of the terrific warwhoop was sounded. The stoutest heart might have quailed and the faces of the Frenchmen grew pale as they reflected that they were surrounded by hundreds of desperate and revengeful Indians, who formed a circle around the lodge. Escape was impossible, and death seemed inevitable. The yell was repeated. “I told you so,” said Jim recklessly. “It is for life now, men, and little chance for that.” “Why did you kill her, Jim?” the white men asked with a shudder. “I told her,” he replied, “that I never rejoiced at the death of a white man—I never will, and no squaw of mine shall do so. I forbade her to do it, and she disobeyed me.”

At the very moment in which they expected the rush upon them to be made, the door was opened, and the father of the murdered squaw entered alone, and silently gazing upon her remains for a few moments, quietly sat down by her murderer. “My son, why did you do this—why did you kill my

daughter?" "She disobeyed me," replied Jim fearlessly. "She forgot her duty." A pause ensued. At length silence was broken by the old man. "My son, you did right. I want all my foolish children dead. She had no ears—she should have obeyed you. I have another girl—she has ears and will hear you. You shall have her for a wife, and she will obey you. Take her and use her well."

Savage as the act was, Jim had only exercised an Indian prerogative, and he actually married another daughter of the old man. Notwithstanding the matter was thus compromised, Jim well knew that as he belonged to another tribe, her friends would revenge her death 77 at some convenient opportunity, and after remaining in the lodge a few days he determined to try to reach his own tribe. The old man selected a guard who were pledged to protect him to a certain point on the way and then give him the start of them about six miles before they pursued him, if they were determined to kill him. They obeyed the instructions, and Jim started off. As soon as they reached the point of his final departure, they stopped, and as soon as he was out of sight, he ran with all his might, for he knew too well what his fate would be if they overtook him. By almost superhuman exertions, he succeeded in outrunning them and in about three days reached the Crows in safety.

He is now in California, and I am told is waiting for the snows to melt on the mountains, when he starts as a bearer of dispatches to some of the distant inland posts. His has been a life of impetuous daring, and this is only one of the many stories which are related of him.

The waters are slowly subsiding, and people are leaving the Valley in crowds for the mines. I go up to work on my claim next week.

A. D.

17. Dawlytown, June 25, 1850.*

THE RAINY season had commenced, and if *non gustibus disputandum* was ever exemplified, it was in the month of November, 1849, in California. It was during one of these not gentle floods that two friends of mine were climbing over the steep mountains through which the South Fork of Feather River forces its way in its rapid course to the parent stream, and although not like Don

Quixote, seeking adventures, adventures came to them which might have honored the Flower of Chivalry himself. They had started on a prospecting tour for gold, and in a region then imperfectly known where, even in good weather, the passage of the hills and ravines was laborious, but now so slippery and the stream so swollen by the floods, it was almost impossible to get along. Supplies, too, on the route were entirely out of the question, and in addition to a pan, pick and shovel, they were compelled to bear upon their shoulders a week's rations, cooking utensils, firearms and ammunition for protection against the savages, and their blankets, which soon being saturated with water, doubled their weight. They had got only about a couple of miles from Bidwell Bar, the last station on the river, when the rain increased so much that they were fain to encamp in a deep gorge, hoping that the morning sun would beam more auspiciously upon them—.

True Delta, August 11, 1850.

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“By heaven, Captain Freeland, this is too bad; we can't get along at this rate; let us lay over until tomorrow.” “I believe you are right, Colonel Grant,” replied Freeland, “this is worse than the hills of Yucatan, for although they were steep and slippery enough, it did not rain like this when we followed the Indians among them.” “Well, old soldier,” responded Grant, “where shall we encamp? The chance for that, even, is somewhat precarious.” “There is a good spot on the hillside under that tree,” said Freeland. “What! across that mad stream? How can we cross?” “O, we can do it,” said Freeland, and to show that it could be done, he attempted to jump from the root of a tree upon a rock near the opposite bank, and he *did land*, nearly waist deep at the foot of the rock in the creek. “Ha! ha! ha!” roared Grant, “you are not a Rhodian Colossus, Freeland. How do you find the diggings?” “Not dry, anyhow,” responded Freeland, crawling out on his hands and knees; “now try it yourself, my fine fellow.”

But Grant had a flea in his ear and concluded to prospect a little higher up for dry diggings, at least in crossing. By good luck he found a pole that had fallen across the stream, and although a rather precarious crossing, he ascertained that it would bear his weight, and he commenced the transit. About midway, his feet slipped, and imitating an equestrian, he found himself sitting astride his wooden horse with his legs dangling in the water over his boot tops.

“Ha! ha! ha!” echoed Freeland, maliciously, “what are you doing there, Grant?” “Bobbing for whales,” grinned Grant, “and I've caught a gudgeon. I never found out the true value of long boots before; when filled with water, they are equal to a balance pole in riding a wooden horse across a crazy brook.” But at length they succeeded in getting safe over and, with much difficulty, kindled a fire by which, although they could not dry themselves, they could cook their salt pork and get warm. Night now came upon them, and spreading their blankets on the wet ground, they laid down to—be rained on—sleep being quite another affair. In a short time Grant nudged his companion.

“Freeland, are you asleep?” “Asleep! what the d—l do you mean by that, Grant?” “O, nothing, only to enquire into the nature of your dreams—as for myself, I've had a vision. I thought as we lay here, under the broad canopy of heaven, that it rained.”—“Rained,” interrupted Freeland; “why, man, you are in a trance.” “Trance or not, I am laying in water at least six inches deep, and it's my impression that we had better move our boots to a little higher ground.” “Nonsense, Grant, your boots are so water-soaked that you can't move 'em. Lay still; your body will warm the water, and if we move we shall catch cold.”

And they did lay still till daylight, and then they arose as wet as if they had been laying in the creek. From stress of weather they 79 were compelled to stay in these very comfortable quaters five days, and by that time they only had two days' rations left.

Anyone who knows California men knows that they keep digging as long as there is a shot left in the locker, and when the storm somewhat abated they again started. Two days of intense labor brought them to Stony Point, and to the end of their provisions, except a small piece of salt fat pork. A man had just got in before them with fifty pounds of flour, and they thought, of course, there was no danger of starving; but on application to the wealthy possessor of so much flour, they learned that only ten pounds belonged to him, and the rest was promised to other individuals —so that, although his disposition was good enough, he was morally unable to let them have a mouthful. “Um! um!” groaned Grant, with his hand on his stomach, which was making imperious demands for tribute, “here's a go, Freeland. What shift can you make in this dilemma? Somehow I am convinced this is a dilemma, for I feel the horns grating under my sternum.” “Humph!” said

Freeland, “I have it—no danger of starving yet; there's a bit of pork left.” “Yes.” “Well, did you ever eat pork soup?” “No, how does it go?” “O, capital. Oysters should not be mentioned the same day,” and Freeland installed himself as cook. Filling their camp kettle with water, the pork was put in, and after boiling a couple of hours, the cook called all hands from labor (of waiting) to refreshment. Freeland helped himself bountifully and worked away like a hero upon it. Grant, on viewing the premises, saw nothing but a little stingy grease on top of the water, and one taste was enough. “What's this, Freeland?” “Why, pork soup, to be sure, and capital too. Never ate better.” Slup! slup! and he guzzled it down as if it was palatable.” “Why, Grant, you don't eat; ain't you fond of it?” “Fond of it?—fond of the d—l; I would as soon eat tartar emetic soup. Augh! augh! I believe in my soul I shall vomit, hungry as I am.” And although it had been fast day with them, he preferred living on Faith and Hope until he could either reach the settlements or, at least, until the rebellion of his stomach was subdued. Another night of suffering, and another day and a half of hard walking, brought them back to Mr. Dawly's, where the inner man was supplied with what their physical condition required. This is no fancy sketch, and I hope you will get the story from Colonel Grant's own mouth; for but a meagre account can be given on paper of what severe trials men often encounter when prospecting in the mountains. It was on Colonel Grant's return from this memorable excursion that I first made his acquaintance, which, I trust, may continue forever.

During the emigration last year, a family from Indiana had all their cattle stolen by the Indians in the night, on the Humboldt or Mary's River, a short time after I passed that point. There they were, without the means of locomotion, a family composed of 80 several small children besides the parents, in the wilderness, many hundred miles from the settlements, and their condition was indeed deplorable. Their case excited the compassion of some of the trains, and a company of twenty-five men, under the command of Captain King, volunteered to go in pursuit and recover the cattle, if possible. After proceeding several miles over the mountains, the company by some means got divided in passing up a gorge, and Captain King found himself with three others, named Elliott,* Moore* and King, traveling by themselves. Turning a sharp point of rocks, they suddenly came upon four Indians who, instead of fleeing, resolutely attacked the captain and his little party. Each man selected his antagonist, and for a while victory was doubtful. Each American drew up his

rifle, but the cap on Captain King's piece exploded without discharging it. The Indians discharged their stone-pointed arrows with great rapidity, and Moore was wounded in his head. Captain King jumped aside as his Indian drew his bow, and the arrow missed him. He immediately closed with him, seizing the bow with one hand and grasping the Indian's hand with the other, while the savage caught hold of the Captain's gun. Both were powerful men and struggled until they were out of breath to obtain possession of each other's weapon and release themselves. Getting breath a little, the Captain kicked the gun out of the Indian's hand and sprang to seize it. His knife and pistol had slipped behind him in the belt, so that he could not use them at the moment, and while he was putting his hand into his vest pocket to get a cap, the Indian let fly an arrow which wounded him in the wrist. By this time he had placed the cap upon the lock, and before the Indian could discharge another arrow, the deadly messenger of death had done its duty. Elliott had also killed his man, but Moore was still fighting. As each arrow was discharged he bent his head and received each one on his skull. He still continued fighting, although he thought himself mortally wounded, calling on the others for aid. His shot had taken effect on the Indian, who still continued to fight with the utmost desperation, until Elliott had dispatched his adversary and ran up to assist Moore. Elliott fired his pistol, when the Indian, finding the odds against him, now for the first time began to think of retreating, although desperately wounded. As he turned to run, Elliott drew his knife and stabbed him, but he still made off, when the former made a pass and cut his neck badly. Under the impression, probably, that now he could not escape, he turned upon Elliott with his knife, but a second thrust cut open his belly, his bowels protruded, and he sank upon the ground, resting upon one arm and striking wildly with his knife. Moore, recovering a little, now ran up, and putting his pistol 81 to the Indian's head, blew out his brains and ended this terrible encounter by the death of his foe, and the white men stood victorious upon this desperate battlefield. Moore eventually recovered, but the cattle were lost entirely, and the unfortunate emigrant was assisted to reach the Valley of the Sacramento by the other trains.

Perhaps the Captain Elliott, from Missouri, mentioned as having been in a fight with Indians. *Free Trader*, February 9, 1850.
Possible William Moore, from Mishawaka, Indiana. Cf. p. 83.

A. D.

18. Stringtown, July 22, 1850.*

EDITORS *Free Trader* —During the last days of June I had my affairs in the Valley arranged and came here to superintend the working of this claim.

Free Trader, September 14, 1850.

After nearly completing our dam, the water, which is still high, percolated through the race and the gravel and the unfinished dam so much that our claim was not dry enough to work. We thought, however, that by throwing out a wing at the head of our claim we could drain a bar sufficiently dry to sink a hole to the bedrock. Accordingly we commenced operations by falling a tall pine that stood on the brink convenient for the purpose of making an abutment. Our company was composed of a Frenchman, the first discoverer of gold in Australia,* an Englishman from Sydney, New Holland, one New Yorker, three stout Yankees from Maine, and three men from Maryland. The most of us were in the river clearing the bed from brush and dirt. When the tree was ready to fall, the word was given, and all got out in time but myself. I happened to be in the middle of the stream and in the deepest part, and owing to the strong current was unable to get out. I made a few steps upward, watching the tree, when I became satisfied it was coming on to me. I stepped back, when it swayed around, and it was now clear that I was directly in its course.

This seems a remarkable anachronism, since gold was not discovered in Australia until February, 1851. "Australia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1948.

My wife and helpless children came into my mind; still I felt perfectly collected, with the thought that if I was killed my companions could tell what had become of me, which was more than many a poor fellow who has perished in the weary search for gold could have done for him, and strange as it may seem a ray of comfort shot through my heart. But there is no man who is threatened with such a death who will not instinctively make an exertion to save his life, however worthless it may be to him. Of course these thoughts passed through my mind in much less time than it takes to tell it. I made one desperate effort more to avoid the falling tree, and could only take two steps against the strong current, and the stones 82 being covered with slime and very slippery, I fell at full length under water as the tree came crashing thundering down, and I found myself with only a slight bruise

amid the branches and spreading limbs, within two or three feet of the trunk, verifying the old proverb that “he who is born to be hung will never be drowned.” Raising myself like a turtle from the water, I saw the men standing aghast on the bank, sure that I was killed. “Well, boys,” I shouted, shaking off the water, “she lays exactly right—could not have done better if we had tried.”

“My God! are you hurt?” was the eager inquiry. “No—no, not in the least. Let us trim it, cut it off, and crack in our dam in less than no time.” I don't know why it was, but at that moment my escape was not in my mind, but the men were so much agitated that they could scarcely speak.

“By Gar!” gasped the honest Frenchman.—“Ough! Monsieur—” and placing his hand on his heart, “you just feel him here—thump, thump, thump. I see the tree—he fell. I see you no get out—I see him kill you sure. I not could speak—my tongue stood still in my mouth wide open,” and all gave me hearty congratulations.—One of our strongest men from Maine, a powerful man named Dunning,* took the axe to trim the limbs from the tree, and getting upon the trunk stepped off again. “I can't do it,” he said; “my knees are so weak that I cannot stand—I never was so frightened in my life,” and it was not until they became calm that I began fully to appreciate my almost miraculous escape, and then I confess that for a little while my knees were weak too.

Zophar Dunning (1825-1899). A native of Charleston, Maine, he arrived in California in 1850 by ship via Australia. After his mining days he resided in Butte and Nevada counties, San Francisco, and Marysville, where he died. Iola Dunning, Ms. in Pioneer File, California State Library.

Our wing dam being finished, we endeavored to sink a hole, but the water came in so fast that we were compelled to abandon it for a few days, till the water subsided still more and until we could contrive to drain off more water. Taking advantage of a couple of days of leisure, I went over to the Middle Fork, in company with Dunning and Periam,* and Norton from Mishawaka.* —The distance was only ten miles by a good mule path to the top of the ridge. From there we had a splendid view. The mountains are broken and piled up in a manner which defies description.—Bare ledges of rocks rear their dark heads in confused and broken masses, while at one point we observed a waterfall at the distance of five or six miles which appeared like a thread hanging about midway in a gorge where the mountains were three thousand feet high. The perpendicular fall is said to be

from eight hundred to a thousand feet. Our 83 view was bounded on the east by a long high granite mountain, perfectly bald without a shrub of vegetation, which is said to extend many miles parallel with the Valley.—Nothing could be more picturesque or romantic. We thought of attempting to reach the falls and commenced a descent to the river, where we held several claims. It was quite perpendicular, but so steep that if we had lost a foothold we should have slid and tumbled more than a thousand feet over the decayed granite, but by taking an angling course we reached the bottom in safety.

From Chicago. Cf. p. 85.
William Norton, "now deceased." David R. Leeper, *Argonauts of 'Forty-Nine* (South Bend, Indiana, 1894), xv.

Refreshing ourselves from our knapsacks, we attempted to reach the fall by clambering over the rocks along the run. An hour's hard labor only brought us half a mile, and we were finally compelled to give it up this time.

And then came the task of climbing the hill. It took us fully two hours and a half, and by nightfall we had reached a little rill, when, exhausted, we sank upon the ground and slept soundly till morning. We reached home completely used up, a little before noon of the second day.

It is said that misery makes strange bedfellows—so does California. I had one the other night. Now don't blush—but it is a fact—I was fairly caught. I slept in the open air on the ground. Towards morning I was awakened by something pricking my side. Supposing it to be an ant or bug of some kind, half-asleep, I brushed it hastily away and turned over and went to sleep again. A little after daylight, I awoke, and throwing off the clothes, there lay snugly nestled by my side a large scorpion. Whether it was him that stung me or something else, I cannot tell, but I felt no inconvenience from it, and they are very poisonous. I soon made beef of him and have thoroughly shook and examined by blankets ever since on retiring to bed. Speaking of being poisoned reminds me that I have seen many men poisoned badly by a species of oak which grows in the mountains.* Its effects are much worse than the poison ivy at home. I have seen men almost blind, covered with sores from head to foot, and completely laid up by simply rubbing against it; yet I have handled it with impunity. It produces no effect on me whatever.—It is a dwarf oak shrub with small leaves,

though it sometimes reaches as high as a man's hands.—It is very plenty in the mountains, and those that it affects have to be very watchful.

Poison oak.

The emigration begins to arrive, and so far as I hear are disappointed and sick of California.—We do not pity them, for they have been advised better. Among my acquaintances are W. B. Hollister and William Moore and family from Mishawaka. The early emigrants will find but few difficulties; the last must suffer on the route.

I have seen nor heard anything of any of the Ottawa Company 84 since I last wrote. In my next I shall probably be able to say something of the good and ill success of the mines. At present *au revoir*.

A. DELANO.

19. Stringtown, Feather River, July 29, 1850.*

ARE YOU fond of romantic views? Is there a touch of the sublime in your nature? Can you enjoy a rural scene? Sit down then, on that old keg—there, pull up the hoops a little, or the staves will fly, and you'll *squat*. Periam, pass that pipe to the *hombre*; drive off the lizards; the gentleman ain't used to 'em yet; they are harmless as young toads and just as good to catch flies. Now cast your eyes around my cabin; that deep old-fashioned fireplace I helped to build myself; I found it rather harder work than lolling over the counter, trying to sell a yard or two of lace edging, with an abundance of small talk, to a pretty young lady. By the way, I would give an ounce just to look at a—. How I am digressing. That bake kettle I paid ten dollars for and lugged it over hill and dale for miles, thinking more of the good bread I could now have, rather than the fatigue. I used to bake in that old frying pan that hangs on a nail over the fireplace, but that we use now only for frying meat and fritters in. The bake kettle is an industrious and worthy article, and good-natured withal, for it bakes all the bread for four large messes or companies. That crowbar, leaning so jauntily against the end of a log, is my poker, as we don't need it in the river digging just now; and on those shelves, made of staves split out of pine logs, you see a pile of sundries, tin pails, coffee pot, tin pans and plates,

knives and broken forks, empty bottles, pickle jars, cans containing prepared meats, potatoes, &c., from New York (we live high now), a hairbrush, comb, grease dish, &c. There hangs our yeast pail; always renew it with flour when you bake, and you'll have good bread—the flour barrel stands in the corner quite handy. Now look at the other side: that pine box standing on two long pegs in the fourth log contains my library. Shakespeare and the Vicar of Wakefield are looking down on us good-humoredly, and well they may; for when we were throwing away provisions, clothes, and almost everything else last year on the plains to lighten our loads so that *we could* get through, I saved these two worthies from destruction, and they have repaid me over and over during the weary rains of winter and—no matter. There they are, with a work on natural philosophy which my father gave me when I was a boy, together with one on 85 geology, and just below you see a file of the *True Delta*, which I receive through the kindness of your agent, and this constitutes my reading privileges. Without the *True Delta*, I should be lost in utter ignorance of what transpired in *America*, for it is about the only paper which comes to hand. Those boots hanging up there belong to one of the boys and hang against the wall as a decoration, we having no pictures. In the window you see a vial containing calomel and one of castor oil. I'm about half sick today, and for fear I shall not make it quite out, I am about to take a dose before I close this letter, for I am threatened with fever, even in this very *healthy* climate (*vide* Bryant and others). In the rear are our bunks, made with an axe and an inch auger—the mattresses are of rough plank, split out of pine trees. Our floor was built when the country was made, and we have not ventured to disturb this part of creation, so that we tread on our mother earth, in or out of the cabin. Among various decorations, equal to the boots on the wall, there hangs an old violin that has a reminiscence attached to it which is of more importance than even its own soft tones. It belonged to an elderly man named Turner, from Henry County, Illinois.* He had made a bargain with a man to bring him to California, but on reaching Fort Laramie, the man sold his wagon and packed through, leaving Turner to shift for himself. Without a friend to aid him, with no money or provisions, without the means of going backward or forward, poor Turner was like a shipwrecked mariner upon a desolate coast, for while many ships were sailing by, it seemed impossible to make them notice his signals of distress. Happily for him, Messrs. Billinghurst, Brown and Periam, of Chicago, came along, and pitying his forlorn condition, they took him aboard their wagon, although their own supplies were none too abundant. On the

road across the plains, Turner was taken with scurvy, and instead of being a help to them on their arrival in the mines, he was only a continued tax upon their generosity and good feeling when even the necessaries of life were procured with difficulty, and notwithstanding disease had made him irritable, they did not relax their assiduity for his comfort, and it was “without the hope of fee or reward.” He moved with them from Long's Bar to this place in November, and if, at times, he was able to draw the bow to “auld lang syne” and “sweet, sweet home” with plaintive melody, with the tears trickling down his careworn cheek, it was destined that “wife nor children more should he behold, nor friends nor sacred home.” He gradually grew worse, and died the last of January. He lies upon the hillside above our cabin, and his violin and a half-written letter is all the mementos left of poor Turner. May God help his widowed wife and fatherless children.

True Delta, September 10, 1850.
Perhaps S. K. Turner, listed as from Illinois and at St. Joseph. St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, Aprl 23, 1849.
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Our table, of which I have said nothing, stands under a bush porch in front of the cabin, where we perform the daily ceremony of mastication with good appetites, but with no one to kiss the cook. Unfortunately I am the cook, and as for being kissed, even if there were any female women here my nose is too, too long. O, get out. Should I apologize for my nonsense? Well, I will. All which is written above on this page and half of the other was done under the operation of two doses of calomel and a dose of oil, and I write just to keep the thought of the infernal stuff out of my mind.

The miners on this fork of Feather River have nearly completed their dams, but generally the water is yet too high and comes into excavations so fast that it is impossible to get low enough to test the bed of the stream. In a few instances it has been done. Three or four claims are paying well; two have been abandoned after thousands of dollars being expended on their dams and races, with only a partial trial. The dam and race of the claim which I am superintending cost over thirteen thousand dollars in labor, and we have yet to dig the first cent. We may find a pile, or we may not get a penny, but we shall not give it up as easily as some have done. An unlooked-for difficulty has occurred on the river which has tested the justice and equity of the miners. In making claims the

levels on various rapids were not taken, and the consequence is that many claims are overflowed by lower dams.

Last Saturday I was summoned as a juror on such a case before the miners' tribunal, composed of the Vice-President of the district, the Secretary and three jurors. Although it was no legal tribunal, and binding only by consent of the parties and by public opinion, the case was opened with as much gravity, the jury and witnesses sworn in as solemn a manner, and as much decorum prevailed as in any court of justice in the world. Double the amount of costs, amounting to $102—that is, eight dollars per day per man, witness, court, and jurymen, was deposited by the parties, the successful litigant to receive his back at the close of the trial. It was the Bedford Company vs. Renfro and Company. The Miners' Code gave the oldest claimant the right of building their dam, and the defendants proved that they had made and occupied their claim about two weeks before the plaintiffs. Of course the jury rendered a verdict in favor of the defendants, which was acquiesced in by the other party, and as much respect paid to the decision of the law as to any legal enactment of Congress. If you knew the class of men who compose the bulk of our mining population, you would not be surprised at this, for obedience to law and love of order, equity and justice has been taught them from infancy. I should be glad to send you a copy of the Miners' Code if I could get time to copy it. The lawmakers at home might gather some idea of what we require if they will make laws for our guidance. It is a little queer that while we are not yet 87 admitted as a State into the Union, we are going as quietly on as if that even had taken place.*

Admission Day was September 9, 1850, but the news did not reach San Francisco until October 18 following. *Pen-Knife Sketches, x.*

Elections have been held, State, county and town officers elected. Courts are duly organized, and proceeding to try cases and writs begin with “State of California,” &c. &c.; and while you are quarreling among yourselves at home about admitting us free and untrammeled into the Union, we are at work minding our own business and, apparently, unconcerned about what course you take with regard to us. If we are not recognized as a State what becomes of all the decisions in our courts of justice, of the acts of the sheriffs, of collectors of revenue, &c &c.? all, all, illegal—all of no account? Fudge! the very people who voted for a State constitution and legislature will sustain their

acts, unless an armed force prevents them, and they will have law and order and justice, in spite of your brawling politicians and barroom debaters. We have some glorious spirits in California. Amid all the dissipation, the gambling and drinking of the Valley towns, we have a class in the mountains—men of intellect, of scientific acquirements, that would honor any community, who are drawn together by a bond of union which proceeds from hardships endured together, a sympathetic disposition, perhaps enhanced by suffering and privations; and these men are superior to the attraction of vice in the towns. Our Sundays and hours of leisure are spent together, and it is then we sometimes forget our toil and trials. If home and its endearments enter into the conversation, it is closed by the wish, and O! expressed in the most heartfelt manner, that if we are successful and once get home, we will meet while on earth at least once a year.

The Indian tribes in the mountains are still quarreling among themselves. Near the Yuba, and between that river and the South Fork of Feather River, are the Pikeys, a thievish and treacherous race. On the east side of the South Fork, and between it and the Middle Fork of the Feather, are the Olos,* a tribe entirely friendly with the whites. A battle between the two tribes took place a few days ago, about three miles from this place, in which two of the Olos were wounded and three of the Pikeys killed. The object of the battle appeared to be to steal squaws, and during the fray the squaws of the Olos were protected by a strong guard. While they were engaged a miner happened to come along and called out to the Pikeys to desist and go home. One of the warriors replied to him by an insulting and indecent gesture, when the miner coolly raised his rifle and applied a bullet plaster to the exposed part of the reckless savage, and dropped him in his tracks. The Pikeys then desisted, 88 but gave notice to the Olos that they would come again today and try it over. Several whites turned out from our settlement to see the fun, but the Pikeys did not appear, though the Olos are summoning their friends to be ready for a grand affair. They were highly delighted with the medical practice of the old miner, and are describing the scene with much gusto to the whites at work on the various bars.

Pikeyand Olo are evidently names of villages or village chiefs, or both, of the Maidu.

Truly yours,

A.D.

20. Independence, September 1, 1850.*

I AM one hundred and fifty miles in the mountains, amid the most sublime scenery I ever saw, where the snow still lingers on the hills and where the ice freezes in our buckets every night. In this pure and bracing atmosphere there is no sickness, and two months from this time the living throng who forced their way into these wilds will be compelled to return to the Valley to escape the deep snows which will then encumber this desolate portion of California. My transitfrom the Valley was a series of adventures which I have partially and briefly detailed to the N. O. *True Delta*,* one of whose correspondents I am (by request —I write none others), and it was one of the most interesting excursions I ever made.

Free Trader, November 16, 1850.
Apparently not published.

I will not detail it to you, as there is subject matter enough left for a full communication without it. The evening previous to my 89 leaving Marysville I had the felicity of receiving your welcome letter and one from my wife, being the only ones I have received from Ottawa since the date of the 25th March. I also received a copy of the *Free Trader*, being the fourth number which has reached me in California.

Hereafter direct all communication to Marysville, Yuba County. I wish I had more of as attentive correspondents as yourself, for one of our greatest pleasures is receiving letters from home—as a proof of this—"Hello, Handy" (a capital fellow from Albion, Michigan, and whose tent joins mine) —"had you rather get a letter from home and go without your dinner, with a mountain appetite, or get your dinner and go without the letter?"—"I had rather have the letter anytime—why, there's no comparison." That's my case exactly, so send on your letters. I am in the region of the fabulous Gold Lake,* but even here there are, as elsewhere, good and poor diggings, and many a poor fellow is delving away without being able scarcely to earn the salt for his porridge, while a few, a very few, are doing well or passably so, and yet this is the richest portion of golden California which

I have seen.—You know my predictions with regard to the sufferings of the coming overland emigrants. They are pouring in upon us and in such a condition as to excite pity from hearts of stone. Last year the great fault of the emigrants was in loading. The present year the emigrants seem to have fallen into the other extreme. They had not provisions enough, and then many started with horses for the sake of greater speed.

The rumor of a lake with golden pebbles appears to have started in 1849; in the summer of 1850 it gathered momentum, aided by interested traders. By the end of the year swarms of unattached miners were combing the Sierra in search of the lake. The name Gold became attached to a body of water in Plumas County, but it had ordinary pebbles. Gudde, *California Place Names*.

Last year the grass was unusually good, better than it had been for many years. But now, either from drought or heavy snows, the grass was dried up, or the melting snows filled the valleys with water and overflowed the grassy bottoms. The valley of the Humboldt, where we traveled many days along the borders of the stream, this year was a vast lake and the emigrants were obliged to take the hills, frequently making long and laborious detours to avoid or get around side valleys where scarcely any forage could be obtained. I recollect one place where they were compelled to go thirty miles over difficult mountains out of their course to make about six. One man paid an Indian fifteen dollars to swim to a little island on the Humboldt and bring over grass enough to feed his mule. Under these circumstances teams gave out, horses and mules broke down, provisions were exhausted, and hundreds of miles from the settlements and far from aid, men, women and children were left entirely destitute, without a mouthful to eat and without the means of 90 getting forward. Perhaps a broken-down horse or mule would be left to carry a remnant of supplies; yet een without this slender aid, you might see even mothers wading through the deep dust or the heavy sand of the desert, or climbing mountain steeps leading their poor children by the hand; or the once strong man pale, emaciated by hunger and fatigue, carrying his feeble infant on his back, crying for water and nourishment, and appeasing a ravenous appetite from the carcass of a dead mule or horse, and when they sink exhausted upon the ground at night, overcome with weariness and want of nourishment, it was only with the certainty of the morning sun they would have to go through with the same or greater evils. Is it strange, then, that under such destitution and misery, where for weeks a draught of good water could not be had, many preferred suicide to this living death? In one day on the Humboldt, three men and two women drowned themselves. The men were observed

and taken out once, but they persisted in declaring that death was preferable and succeeded in committing the desperate deed. The women had families and, unable longer to witness the suffering of their children with no prospect of relief, chose the dreadful alternative. I can well appreciate their feelings; for although my sufferings last year were not so great, yet I have seen many a day when death had no terrors. By the earliest who succeeded in reaching the Valley the sufferings of the emigrants were made known and large and liberal contributions of provisions were made and sent out. In addition, traders forced themselves over the snows of the Sierra as far as the Humboldt, but these supplies were scarcely felt. Five pounds of flour were doled out to a man from the free supplies, and afterwards reduced to two and a half, with which they had to travel two hundred miles, and the traders asked two and a half dollars a pound for flour and pork. Hundreds had no money, and even if they had, a large amount would be required to obtain enough to sustain a family through. Of course all were not thus destitute. Some arrived who had provided themselves well, but hundreds and hundreds suffered thus. And now what will they do when they arrive? Though labor is nominally from five to eight dollars a day, there is not sufficient employment for ven those who wintered here, and while a few, very few, may strike a good lead and do well, the great mass can scarcely get enough to sustain life. We shall see more suffering, more destitution this winter than there ever has been, and although there is gold in the mountains, the indefatigable attempt to get it of those who came a year ago without success, wheresoever courage, strength and manhood have been used to their full extent, surely should convince you at home that it is folly to forsake a living business at home and come here in the desperate search of gold. I saw a few days since an old friend of mine from Indiana who had just arrived. He had suffered on the plains, but he got through.

He was a scientific engineer, an industrious worthy man, and doing well at home. He had got a temporary berth as engineer on a small steamboat at a hundred dollars a month, when he could have got more at home. “Why did you come here?” I asked. “Did not all our letters discourage further emigration?” “Yes, but you said there was gold here, and we thought we could get it if you could —that we cuold get it if anybody could; besides too, to speak frankly, we thought that as so many were getting rich they only wrote such letters back to keep others away. And the statements in the

papers too, of the immense sums received from California and extracts taken from California papers of rich diggings being continually discovered, of those who had dug large sums in a few days or weeks, made us think that your letters of advice were dictated by sinister motives or that you had not given a correct view of the subject."

"Well, what do you think of it now—are you satisfied?"

"I am—I have seen the Elephant and I wish myself at home."

I have asked the same questions of many and always with the same result. Our honest statements have been either disbelieved or have been ascribed to a motive which does not exist, that of keeping our friends away.

I have sometimes concluded a conversation with many a poor fellow who has become entrapped, by saying what I believe to be true: "Gentlemen, the gold is here—now get it." I can tell you of men who have dug from ten to twenty pounds of gold in a day, but for one such man I can show you a thousand who have made no more than their living. I have seen lumps of gold that weighed several pounds, but for every large lump I have seen hundreds who had not money enough to pay for a dinner. A few who have gone home in the intoxication of success may extol the country and the ease of getting rich. They are the few lucky ones whom fortune has favored. Friends and Fellow Countrymen, if you are determined to come, do so. If you are fortunate, why, well; but if you share the fate of thousands who have gone before you, the consequences be upon your own heads.

I think the course pursued by the conductors of the press in California highly reprehensible in the matter of reporting what I know to be an unfair condition of things respecting gold digging which is one cause of promoting emigration. Under the head of "News from the Mines," glorious accounts are given of the success of various individuals which are calculated to deceive you at home. A few lucky adventurers are reported, the amount raised by each in a short time, &c., &c. This may be true. But not one word is said of the disappointed thousands of those who have worked a whole year without success. Were they to place in one column the cost of outfit, the expense of living and of operating there, the number of unsuccessful miners and business men against the number

of lucky ones and the 92 amount raised by them, it would present a fearful array of figures against California. I believe there have been more fortunes made here by trading and speculation than by mining. The hundred-thousand-dollar men are those who have got rich by speculations, trade or gambling.

Nearly all the claims on the South Fork of Feather River have failed as high as the cañon.*

Apprently about a mile and a half above Enterprise. Cf. p. 38.

Four or five have proved good. A company a mile below Stringtown who had made three or four thousand dollars last winter on the Middle Fork took up a claim a little above on the South Fork, built a dam and race at an expense of two thousand dollars and did not get a dollar. Another company built a dam and race at an expense of over fourteen thousand dollars and did not get three hundred.* A dozen companies in the vicinity erected dams at from three to ten thousand dollars, and after enduring the labor of prospecting in the winter rains, building cabins, making roads over mountains and suffering incredible hardships with the fortitude which belongs to the American race, have relinquished their claims without getting a dollar, perfectly bankrupt and in debt for the very bread they ate while at work with high anticipations of a fair remuneration. And the traders too have suffered by extending credits to those men who would pay them if they could—but cannot. I know the most of these men personally, and a more industrious and honorable class of men do not exist. In the grand rush to Gold Lake two months ago, thousands of men were in the mountains making the search, and what was the consequence? Why, some good deposits were found and a few made rich or comfortably off, but the great mass made nothing. So it is here. And who is to blame for holding such high attributes to California, for showing but one side of the picture, which induces men, women and children to leave home, friends and comforts to launch forth into a sea of uncertainty, of misery, death, and only of doubtful success, but those through whom they glean their information, the conductors of the presses? The failure of dams is not confined to Feather River alone, but so far as I can learn, it is about the same on all the streams which have been extensively dammed to get at the bed of the stream. Perhaps my statements may not be credited by those who

rely upon the arrivals of gold quoted in the papers and by the more ardent at home. All I have to say then is, “Come and try it yourselves—the gold is in the mountains— *get it*.”

This may refer to Delano's experience near Stringtown. Cf. p. 86.

In a letter to Hon. J. D. Caton which I see you have published,* I spoke of the condition of things with regard to land titles and squatters' rights. The matter has been festering until it has reached 93 a head and has broken out. Congress has delayed to admit California as a State, quarreling over an abstract question with which we have nothing to do* and thus indirectly countenancing the vicious and evil-disposed in their course against law and order. You will see by the papers the sanguinary conflict of the squatters on town lots in Sacramento City with the constituted authorities.* This is one of the results of the delay in allowing us to settle our own matters and is only a prelude to other excesses. The authorities are determined to maintain the laws of a State whether admitted or not, and I for one think it highly important for the good of society that they should do so. But the squatters on town lots should not be included with squatters on vacant lands or on the vast claims made under Mexican grants. For instance, if I first lay claim to 160 acres of land and comply with the requisitions of the law, the land properly becomes mine. If I lay out a town on this 160 acres, which is all I can hold by law, my right extends over the whole plat. If another person occupies one of my town lots he trespasses on my equitable rights, and it is in some such way that the difficulty originated at Sacramento City, the squatters refusing to yield their claims to the original proprietors, although there is another dispute with the first occupants on account of its being held as a Mexican grant.—It is certain that the plat was laid out before a State government was organized. The Sacramento squatters are a formidable body of men determined to have a home, but I think they will finally be compelled to yield.* But there is another question in embryo which will not be so easily settled, and that is squatting on government land—rather upon Mexican grants, for there is not three hundred square miles of desirable land such as can be cultivated in California but what is claimed by a few individuals under Mexican grants. The squatters on this land have the sympathies of the mass of the population, for they think it unreasonable that the few should control the many and deprive them of an abiding place in a new country like this, and under the circumstances which

brought them here and compelled them to stay. Here then is another serious affair in embryo and a matter which will be yielded only at the point of the bayonet. Unless Congress settles the matter in some equitable way soon, difficulties of a most serious nature will ensue.

P. 46.
The issue of whether it should be a slave or free State. Robert G. Cleland, *History of California: The American Period* (New York, 1922), 257-261.
The Squatter Riots of August 14 and 15. Cf. Sacramento *Transcript*, August 15-16, 1850.
They were. royce, *op. cit.*

I think I have written you respecting the miners' law on claims. This is a matter which takes care of itself and is as faithfully obeyed as any law of Congress, and it is hardly written, much less printed. I appealed a few days ago to the President of the Association for a 94 copy of the law for the purpose of sending it home for publication. After a diligent search, it was ascertained that but a single copy existed, and that was ten miles distant. But it is well understood, and when you hear of one miner *suing* another on a disputed claim, it is not before a judicial tribunal but before the self-constituted miners' court.

But I talk so much of California that I doubt not you, as well as your readers, are wearied—and surely it is no pleasure for me to describe the actual condition of things as I see them. When you get tired of paying the postage on my lucubrations, say so, and I will trouble you no more.

Perhaps I repeat things over and over like old story-tellers; I keep no copies of my letters and cannot tell what I have written before. I should be glad to get the *Free Trader*, but the only paper I get from the States with any degree of regularity is the *True Delta*, which comes through my friend Mr. Grant.

It is now sickly in the Valley, chill, fevers, ague and flux prevailing; but in the mountains as high as this nobody is sick.

Send all communications through New York.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

21. Independence, October 20, 1850.*

IT IS with a kind of desperation that I seize the pen this morning as an antidote to ennui. The miners have been mostly frightened away by a succession of stormy weather, rain in the valleys and snow on the mountains; and I am also preparing to evacuate these diggings in two or three days. I shall remove to the mouth of the creek* four miles below, where about two hundred and fifty men are preparing winter quarters where, by the appearance of the trees, the snow falls forty or fifty feet deep.

True Delta, December 17, 1850.
Nelson Creek.

The miners who are left here are all out at work, and I went out and rocked the cradle an hour or so for pastime, and got only twenty-five cents; so I gave it up, and not to let the time hang heavily on my hands, I take up my pen to make you pay a postage to Uncle Samuel, who never refuses such contributions, although his boys may grumble sometimes at having to make them. I shall return to the Valley as soon as I dispose of my traps, and then I have several operations in view. I generally succeed better at hard work than in mining, and I have discovered, after an outlay of two 95 thousand dollars, that my steamboat force and horsepower is not equal to the labor of digging and sweltering in the sun. I have talked so much of scenery that people must be tired of it; but Heaven knows that if they had a spice of my disposition, they would never weary in looking at what there is around us here. Eight miles from here is an old volcano.* I had a fair view of it yesterday, and before I go to the Valley I shall visit it. At its base is the richest deposit yet found in this vicinity. If I could get ropes and the right men to handle them I would see what there is inside —that is, I would go into it as far as I could and be pulled out again; I'll have a peep anyhow. I am cogitating a subject for one of these days, but I want to go below first—I mean “the present state of California.”

I think when the sufferings of the emigrants both on the plains and after their arrival is known at home, our people will begin to see California stripped of her gaudy robes, her paint and outward adornments, which have been so liberally heaped upon her by thoughtless letter-writers and culpable editors, and they will be content to stay at home and reap their own grain, and enjoy the comforts which they really possess, rather than come here to starve or pick up what would be thrown from their own tables at home to satisfy the cravings of hunger. The *greatness of California*! Faugh! Great for what and for whom? Great at present as an outlet to a portion of the surplus wheat, pork and clothes, blacklegs, prostitutes and vicious at home, and for the would-be politicians of the country and the ultras who quarrel over us in Washington. Oregon will be the greatest of the two, and here is another theme. She will have more wealth in time by selling her potatoes to us at five dollars per bushel, her lumber at thirty dollars per M, her flour, her pork, and soon her woolens, her leather, &c., &c., than we shall have with all our mines. If I was a politician (thank God *I am not*), I would gather statistics enough to satisfy any political economist on this subject.

Little Volcano, in Plumas County.

I am a little curious to learn what effect a residence in California has had upon that portion of emigrants who have returned, whether they have as easily relapsed into steady habits again when surrounded by the moral influences of our old country, as they (not all, be it understood) fell into the snares of vice without any such restraint here. Could not we get up some tall lectures on what we have seen—eh? *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by that most beautiful of all writers, Gibbon, or the rise and progress of Mormonism, couldn't hold a candle to it; it's the subject I mean, not our style or descriptive powers.

It is noon and near dinnertime. Will you join me? Don't fear a griddle-cake infliction. No, no, just a plain family dinner—fried 96 potatoes and ham. I made some gingerbread yesterday—all but the ginger (that I couldn't get)—it's good, too, and that shall be our dessert. Will you have a glass of wine?—just bring it along, for I haven't got it; but there is chocolate enough left from my breakfast to warm over again. Come, boys, move that monte bank off the table; the Colonel* and I want to dine. Hardy, drive that mule out of the tent; let him wait till we get through. There, Colonel, scrape

off that old cigar, take that keg and go your death. Pshaw! Colonel, don't pick your teeth with the fork; take your bowie knife. What's the use of being so effeminate? Now, tumble down on my mattress and take a siesta, while I talk to the boys.

Unidentified. Probably not Grant, who was busy in Sacramento.

I have been sketching a little since I have been here, and succeed in getting correct outlines much better than I hoped for; but no pencil can do justice to the sublime scenery of the mountains. You shall have an impress of the Middle Fork volcano.* If in going into it I meet old Pluto, I will get a description of the infernal regions, and if I find him in a communicative humor, I will ask him to explain the cause of the "mysterious knockings" which are bothering brother Greeley* and many other wise ones at home. I wish I was rich enough to stop work. I would just make one grand tour through this mountain range, for you not only get one magnificent view but you see a hill ahead that you long to be on for the sake of another. Once there, something new, varied and grand entices you on like an *ignis fatuus*, so that there seems no end, and you are compelled to remain unsatisfied—as I am to wind up for want of paper.

Little Volcano.
Horace Greeley, editor of the widely read and copied New York *Tribune*. This must refer to some item concerning the ever-popular subject of spiritualism.

Adieu,

A. D.

22. Marysville, October 31, 1850.*

I've "come down," in the language of the monte dealers, but not in their sense of the expression, with the dust.

True Delta, December 17, 1850.

I have only made a transit from the mountain snows of the Sierra to the sunny Vale of the Sacramento, unharmed by the desperado or the treacherous savage, and I once more move in the throng of civilized man—a washed, combed and shaven *hombre*. I see many changes in matters and

things which have occurred during my last sojourn in the mountains, but presuming that your other 97 correspondents will keep you sufficiently advised of them, I will speak now of mountain life.

I was as near *the Gold Lake* as any one probably ever was, and although I saw its blue and ice-cold water, I *did not* see its golden pebbles. The country, however, is highly auriferous in its appearance, and I do not doubt that another season will make rich developments. It is a high, broken range of stupendous hills and deep gulches, where the labor of gaining access is only equaled by the toil of digging gold—where the sun is seen in the ravines scarcely before nine or ten o'clock in the morning, and disappears behind the snowy peaks at four o'clock in the afternoon. By the indications on the trees, the snow falls to the depth of forty feet—perhaps deeper; yet, in this sterile and gloomy region, hundreds of hardy men are preparing to pass the winter, which lasts from November to the 1st of July. To do this, comfortable log cabins are built, and supplies of provisions are packed up on mules, and for the sake of being on the ground before the crowd can get up from the Valley in the spring, they are contented to be buried in the snow, where even the grizzly bear cannot subsist, depending upon their own resources to while away the gloomy hours of their long winter. The experience of the last season has developed many things which will be highly useful to future operations, but I shall speak more particularly of this in some subsequent communication. When you hear of new placers being found, of new diggings discovered, you need not be surprised. These things are of almost daily occurrence, not only regions just explored, but on ground which had been passed over and over by the hardy gold hunter. It has been pretty well tested that the beds of streams are not, as a general thing, the place to look for large deposits. In my explorations of last winter, I did not pass the granite range, but this summer I was far beyond it and saw a geological combination of strata which I do not recollect being noticed by any author. In the Gold Lake Mountains I observed strata of quartz and slate combined in such a manner as to form a single rock. They were so closely blended that one seemed to pass into the other without any line to mark the change, and like the delicate shading of a fine picture, you could not tell where either began. Sometimes on breaking a piece of slate, the fracture showed you a quartz combination, and often the fractured quartz presented the shadowing of slate. I saved and brought down a few beautiful

specimens. But here, as elsewhere, the earth was of a reddish brown cast, and the gold proving by its spherical form that it had not been washed far from its original place of deposit.

During my stay at Gold Lake, I visited an extinct volcano.* The mass of matter which had been thrown out was quartz (at least it is called so), apparently mixed with some substance which rendered 98 it as hard as flint and by the action of fire presented many fantastical forms—in some instances translucent—sometimes with the crystals perfectly formed, at others partially destroyed. I preserved a few fine specimens. There was no lava, and some of the peculiar volcanic debris which I have often observed in the Rocky Mountains and on the hills west of the Sierra Nevada, in the Oregon Range. Outcrops of slate appeared at and near the base; and along the river bank, directly at the foot of the mountain, one of the richest deposits was found which I have known, one man taking out $1,500 in a single pan full. I do not, however, give this as a specimen of the richness of the placer, for this was about all that was found in that spot. Since the general failure of dams, experiments have been made by sinking shafts in the hills and ravines, and this, at the depth of from ten to twenty feet, has been attended with success in many instances. It is necessary to go to the bedrock, which is done with great labor often. These latter experiments have been made in the mountains immediately bordering the Valley, from six to fifteen miles distant. It seems as if gold loses its value with miners. Some—indeed many who are successful—save their earnings; yet multitudes, after months of toil and privation, first in hunting a location through rain and snow or in the broiling sun, and then in the labor of digging, when they begin to reap the reward of their perseverance, squander it away as if its very possession burned their fingers.

Little Volcano.

When I first went to Independence, there were companies who every day took out from one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars. This continued for three weeks, when the equinoctial storm came on with rain and snow. Fearing they would be caught by the deep snow which falls so high up, they became panic-stricken and fled from the diggings. When they left, many had not money to pay small bills due for provisions. The reason was simply that they had gambled it away, and on reaching the Valley I saw some of these very men at work for their board, and some at a nominal price of six dollars a day. Wherever good placers are found the gambler is sure to

follow; and another fashion is fast coming into use, which will be fully so when *that philanthropic importation arrives from France*.* Well, somebody will be benefited by the improvidence of miners.

Prostitution.

A. D.

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23. Sacramento City, November 5, 1850.*

. . .AS FOR the aristocracy of wealth, I don't know what it is here, nor the aristocracy of employment, and that is one of the good features of the country. Look at that rough-looking customer driving a dray, and now look into that eating house or hotel, at that plainly dressed woman behind the counter or waiting upon the table. How do you know but that the drayman has been a member of Congress, is a gentleman of education and distinction, or the woman a lady of refined manners, reared in the lap of luxury, and with a high order of talents? Go to an evening party; they may be the life and soul of as elite, as polished a circle as you ever saw. What would you think of a man selling newspapers about the streets of Ottawa? Would your aristocrats make him at home in their circles? I tell you (for I know him well) that a more polished gentleman does not exist. His acquirements are of the highest order, and he could fascinate you with his intellectual conversation, and no one man in California possesses more influence with the mass, who is more courted or more trusted than he, and all doors are open to receive him. He can be the madman or the critic as he pleases, and he knows what he is about! Yet selling newspapers in the streets of this city is his employment.*

Free Trader, November 28, 1950. The editor thus explains the lacuna in this letter: “We received a long and more than usual interesting letter from our valuable friend Mr. Delano in the recent California mail but, by some unavoidable accident, a large portion of this valuable communication was irrevocably destroyed. The letter was dated at Sacramento City November 5. He had just returned from the mountains, where he had been for a number of months, and in his ablest style he fully detailed the many changes which had taken place in the city during his absence. It seemed as though he had gotten into a strange city. The streets which had been lined with tents, were now walled in with large and substantial buildings both of brick and of wood. Society had also assumed a more refined character. Magnificent hotels had been erected, with bars and saloons decorated with handsome paintings and engravings in gaudy frames, while luxuries had become as common almost as in the

states. With this magnificence and luxury, however, vice, licentiousness and debauchery has increased, and now stalks in broad daylight, in its more loathsome forms, uninterrupted through the streets."
This is Colonel Grant.

Intellect is the true aristocracy as yet, and "birds of a feather flock together." *Sans* hat, shoes or shirts. If employment were to drive a man from kindred association where the d—l should I find company?

Since I have been a citizen of this ilk, I have actually and *bona fide* been teamster, cook, canal digger, engineer, doctor, merchant, mule driver, miner, artist, and speculator, mended my own clothes, washed my own shirts, the last a confounded mean job, and I always mentally exclaimed, God help the poor women! as I was rubbing in the soap, and went barefoot for two weeks.

Really though, if I was going to a party either in Illinois or Sacramento, I would sew up the holes in my pants and get a pair of shoes or not go, just to save the feelings of my friends who might be a little scrupulous, for in "Turkey you must do as the Turkeys do" and gobble accordingly. When I lived with the Indians, I paid a decent regard to their feelings and customs, and in extreme hot days only wore my shirt, and the only remark it occasioned was the ridiculous whiteness of my legs; but they called me "tope Wanamah" (good fellow) and seemed to regard me as one of their own kind.

I am at this moment a citizen of the world with nothing to do. Desirous of a little relaxation I came here on a visit to my friend Colonel Grant, and he has invited me to go to San Francisco with him. We leave at noon to return in three days, and I promise myself a feast as well from his companionship as from a new view of the Pacific. When I return, it will be "work, work, work" like Robin Rougham.* "Nothing in the world but work," but whether it will be in the preaching line, blacking boots, selling matches or pork and potatoes, I cannot tell. There are two questions which always puzzle me to answer. Where I live and what my business is. It is just anywhere and anything which turns up. If you want to go into a speculation come out and I will give you a share (thirty lots) in Yateston or Hamilton. If you want business you may go snucks with my Indians in catching salmon or crickets.

Delano probably means Robin Roughhead, a poor cottager and farm laborer, hero of a romantic comedy of 1799 entitled *Fortune's Frolic*, by John T. Allingham.

Cholera is here, thirty to sixty deaths per day.* Gamblers beginning to be frightened and many leaving. Business falling off rapidly. There appears to be a greasing up of the clouds and we begin to look for the rains. I have seen none of the Ottawa boys lately except Robert Brown. He told me that all whom he had heard from who were engaged in damming the rivers had lost money. I have not seen Fredenburg nor B. K. Thorn since I parted from them last fall and have only two or three times heard from them indirectly. I do not know where they are or what their success has been. It is strange I do not get the *Free Trader*. I have received only five numbers, but letters come now with much regularity. How many of you citizens may we expect next year?

Sixty to 120 deaths a day were reported, and four fifths of the population left town, during the great epidemic of October and November, 1850. *History of Sacramento* (Oakland, 1880), 56-57.

The great wealth obtained by those who came out last year, the exquisite pleasure of the trip enjoyed by those who came this summer, together with the brilliant prospects before them this winter, will induce another heavy emigration. Plenty of gold dust in the mountains, boys; only get it.

Yours,

A. DELANO.

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24. San Francisco, November 15, 1850.*

DIG, dig, dig, and so I did, till I dug two thousand dollars and over, but hang me if I didn't dig it out of pocket instead of in. I prospected through spectacles and cañons with spectacles and without, and such spectacles as I saw of men who had dug and worked till their faces were gaunt and their nether garments were dilapidated, with pockets torn off, proved the truth of the old saw that “all is not gold that glitters.”* So I came to the conclusion that if I was made for the mountains the mountains were not made for me to get rich in. I had heard, too, that to make money a man must go where

people are, for there the money is. I had been where people were not, and I knew it didn't pay, so I commenced prospecting in new diggings.

True Delta, January 9, 1951.
Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, II, vii, 65.

When I left Marysville I had no more idea of going below Sacramento City than you have of going to the moon, but I wanted to see Colonel Grant. You know him—so do I, like a book—Mem., keep a copy of that book always on hand.

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Now, how he treated me I shan't say, only that if he has many such hangers-on, he'll be ruined; from which, and from his multitude of friends, “God deliver him.” If he had only one shirt he'd tear it in two and give the half to a friend. He was going to San Francisco and invited me to accompany him, an offer which my modesty could not resist, especially as the *True Delta* is, somehow, a password not to be questioned by steamboat men on the Sacramento when it comes through his lips. I had heard of San Francisco, a kind of out-of-the-way place in the lowlands, where barbarians from all countries congregated, where the fulsomeness of their ridiculous fashions, manners, and customs offends the eye, and I determined to go, even at the expense of losing caste. You know I came across the plains, that I have lived chiefly in the mountains, that I have sung of the native beauties in their grass aprons and costumes *à la Nature*, that I have praised the noble-hearted miners with their flowing beards, that I have described the scenery of the hills, and that my experience in the world above (I mean up the River) is such that I can see and judge without prejudice, however different things may be from what I have been accustomed to. Pshaw! there's no egotism in that—not here, anyhow—so don't pucker your mouth yet; you'll pucker it worse by and by.

Did you ever hear of the *New World*? Not Captain Columbus's nor any of the islands about New Orleans. I mean the steamboat on the Sacramento, Captain Wakeman—ain't she a crack boat, and ain't the Captain some?* Everything on board goes like clockwork except the engine, and that goes by steam, and the boat goes like a locomotive. Everything in tip-top style, cabins, tables, staterooms, magnificent; cook, steward, chamber- *boy*, and waiter, civil and obliging, and the Captain's a gentleman. Can I say more? It will pay a man to lay over a week just to make a trip on

her. Well, we went on board. The cholera was bad at Sacramento, and Colonel Grant was not well. A rumbling in the lower regions was a premonitory symptom, and knowing that No. 6 was good for the epidemic, he wisely took stateroom No. 6, which with a free use of morphine, cayenne pepper, and camphor finally quieted the symptomatic indication of volcanic eruption. This is a horrible volcanic country about these days. I found the country as we passed along most tediously level, and I sighed for fifty pounds' weight on my back and a mountain to climb. How awfully dull it was, not a hill which would make a greenhorn puff, and the poor engine had to do it all.

Captain Edgar Wakeman (1818-1875). Coincidentally, Wakeman also commanded a steamboat named the *New Orleans* on the Sacramento in 1850. He later earned the admiration of Mark Twain, who immortalized him three times as a Captain in fiction and who publicly solicited aid when Wakeman was old, ill, and needy. Morse, *First History of Sacramento*, 56; San Francisco *Alta California*, December 14, 1872; May 10, 1875; Ivan Benson, *Mark Twain's Western Years* (Stanford University, 1938), 152.

We arrived at San Francisco before daylight, and I sallied out 103 after sunrise to view a scene which to me was entirely new. How sadly was I disappointed. I had heard the beauty of the Bay described, its capacity to hold thousands of ships, and the town as a city. Why, gentlemen, I couldn't see the Bay at all, for the ships, jammed together like a vast forest of dead pines, hid it entirely, and I “couldn't see the town for houses.” Now there isn't a single *ranchería* in California that you can't see the whole at a glance with all the women and children; and here you couldn't begin—it was abominable. A stranger would require a guide to find his way to any point along the trails, and had it not been for the kind care of Colonel Grant, I should have been prospecting up to this time—a lost miner in the gulches. All the people, and the trails were full as if they had found new diggings, wore clothes—actually fine white shirts, dress coats, and whole pants, with hair combed and brushed like new wigs, boots blacked, and you could scarcely find a check or red flannel shirt in the whole crowd. And then there were carts, drays, candy stands, bookracks, newsboys, and the Lord knows what all in the trails, so plenty that it kept me on a dogtrot to elbow my way through and keep up with the Colonel. Why, I actually saw a woman, at least the Colonel said it was one, with a parasol over her head, a bonnet on, and hang me if she wasn't *dressed all over* in silk. Thinks I to myself, she never drove team on the sand plain nor made acorn bread in a ranch, poor thing. Here she is cooped up in town without knowing anything of the beauties of nature! I pitied her from my soul.

Everybody knew Colonel Grant just as if he had always lived in the mountains, and they all seemed glad to see him, shaking hands till his arm ached, and finally they got to shaking hands with his shadow. I was his shadow, for the tall houses hid the sun so that he couldn't have any other. So I shook hands till my legs ached, and I finally told the Colonel he must get another shadow, for I was used up. “Well,” says he, “let's go to sea.” “Go to see who?” says I. “Pshaw! I mean prospecting on the Bay.” “Very well,” said I, “I'm ready, pick in hand; lead, I'll follow your trail.” So he made tracks for a wherry, and after pulling a long way out, we brought up at the foot of the barque *Constance*, Captain Barry, from Salem.* Here was a relief—we couldn't go on board without climbing, and I began to feel at home. Climbing the side of a tall ship was no ways equal to climbing a hill five miles high, and the time it took was ridiculously small, but it rested me exceedingly, although it was 104 prospecting on an entirely new trail. We were met on deck by Captain Barry, whose frank and cordial hospitality was equal to that of an old miner. I somehow felt at home at once, on being ushered into the cabin. That perhaps is not strange, for I have lived in *cabins* or tents nearly all the time I have been in California, and the fashion of climbing to get into it was much more agreeable than that of stepping off of a flagstone into a hotel; and here, too, I could see a check shirt and a tarpaulin hat without that everlasting bowing and scraping of the barbarians on shore, and the masts, so trim and straight, put me in mind of the glorious old pines of the mountains. Thinks I to myself, this going to sea is not so bad after all. The sea-faring hombres are a civilized race with souls as large as their ships.

Captain John Barry (1805 or 1806-1876), a native of Salem. He was second officer of the *Friendship* of Salem when she was cut off and captured by Malays on the coast of Sumatra in 1831. The *Constance* arrived at San Francisco on August 10, 1850, 177 days from Boston, and departed for Manila November 15 following. San Francisco *Alta California*, August 11, 1850; Sacramento *Transcript*, November 18, 1850; Salem (Massachusetts) *Register*, January 24, 1876; San Francisco *Pacific Marine Review*, September, 1921.

We met several captains of other ships on board, and somehow, between tales of the ocean and tales of the mountains and desert, the time slipped like a mountain slide, and it was tea time before a gulch was tested. “Captain,” says Grant, “shall you have any griddle cakes for supper?” “I do not think my cook knows how to make them,” replied Captain Barry. “Come, D., roll up your sleeves and go into the cookroom and go at it,” said G. The captains all laughed at the idea—“He

cook? What does he know about cooking? No, no, that's breaking ground a little too strong." "I tell you what," said G., "I must have griddle cakes for supper, and he can make them—I know it." "Captain," says I, rising and throwing off my coat and cap, "don't you know that I came across the plains and have lived in the mountains? Did you ever see a miner who could not cook, wash, mend, make shoes, prospect, and spin yarns? Tell the cook to tote up the flour, and I'll tote up the cakes." We had griddle cakes for tea—I made 'em, and G. said they were better than those I made for him last fall on Mud Hill.

Captain Welsh, of the *Merlin*,* was on board, and he gave a most interesting account of a recent visit to Loo Choo, one of the dependencies of Japan.* It seemed to me that there were many particulars connected with his visit which would be of importance to our government to know, but as the recital is his own private property, I shall not touch it. He is a gentleman of talents and can make out (as he intends doing) a highly interesting document respecting that strange and peculiar people. I hope you will get his letter, and I promise you a rich treat from its perusal.

Perhaps Charles Welsh, an American sea captain who first came to California in 1848 and died at San Francisco in 1883. Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 771.
Now the Ryukyu Islands.

We passed two nights on shipboard enjoying the hospitality of Captain Barry, whom I shall long remember, spending our days among the barbarians on shore. I might give you a labored description of San Francisco, but I have hardly time now to go into particulars. I don't think you have got a clear idea of it from any 105 description which I have read, nor of the manners and customs of the natives. The town is abominably crowded with people, all dressed from top to toe. I haven't seen a naked man or woman in the streets, and their ways are as *outré* as their appearance. The buildings are overgrown things with doorways so large that you can walk in without getting on your hands and knees. Beef and bread are so ruinously cheap that the very dogs are fed on it, and when a man uses salt, he piles it up to waste just as if it cost nothing, and I actually saw a little boy throw away a piece of bread *which he could not eat at once*. Just think of the poor starving souls on the plains. Water is of no more account than if a spring lay in every gulch, and—well, well, live and learn—notwithstanding my repugnance, I have about been persuaded to spend this winter here.

A.D.

25. San Francisco, January 15, 1851.*

ONE year ago this day I was hard at work in the Feather River mountains, whenever the rains would permit, in building a fireplace and finishing off a comfortable cabin on a claim which I had taken up, with the bright anticipation that at the present writing I would be comfortably seated in a snug, carpeted room at home, with my family around me and a few friends, discoursing upon the wonders which I had seen, of the perils I had encountered, and showing with honest pride the curious specimens which I had picked up in the mines of California; and what has been the result? The building was completed, the work done, and I never worked so hard in my whole life. I lived with the utmost prudence and calculated to a nicety, but not only that claim, but twelve others in which I was interested, failed—all failed, and not a dollar was obtained, and by the changes incident to the country, I have become a resident and man of business in the most astonishing city of the Union. And yet I should not complain—nor do I.

True Delta, February 23, 1851.

With only four dollars in my pocket when I arrived at Sacramento City last year, I have contrived to handle thousands, and although a great deal of it would not stick to my fingers; yet some of it did, and a portion of it is in a shape which neither "moth will corrupt nor thieves break through and steal," being a farm on the navigable waters of Feather River.* You never would dream that the *True Delta* had been the cause of my being a resident of San Francisco; yet such is the fact. You know the history of my first 106 acquaintance with Colonel Grant. By his solicitation I became your correspondent, and that correspondence made us acquainted with each other, which soon ripened into intimacy, and the *True Delta* was a bond of union between us. When I came down from the Gold Lake mountains in October, I paid Colonel Grant a friendly visit and, at his invitation, visited San Francisco for the first time, which resulted in my establishing myself for the time being in business here.

Matthew vi: 19. The "farm" was probably at Oleepa.

Had it not been for the *True Delta* my first acquaintance with Colonel Grant would have ended where it began, at Mud Hill, and had it not been for the *True Delta*, I should not have classed among my friends one of the most generous, noble-hearted gentlemen I ever knew, despite of all his eccentricities.

Men who live isolated in the mountains know but little of what is going on in the Valley, only in a general way, and those who live in the cities can scarcely understand and appreciate fully what is going on in the mines. Conflicting accounts often reach both parties, and I hesitate to describe only what I see. What I have written of the mountain region and such portions of California which I have seen, I have no reason to change. I simply described it as I saw it. I am now in a new sphere, and with a change of season, a change of climate, and a great change of association, I find myself in quite a new scene. And if I could make it pay I would vary the scene still more, for I would see the whole country—aye—and other countries too.

Last year, from the 3rd of November till about the 1st of February, it was pouring down "from the flood gates of Heaven" like big guns. The rivers overflowed their banks and more than one quarter of the Valley was submerged. This year, up to the present time, there has not been near as much rain as is usual at home, and the weather has been luxuriously pleasant.

The climate on the Coast I think is healthy and decidedly desirable for a residence, and were it not for three especial reasons—a wife and two children at home—I should not think of returning. The valley of Santa Clara and the country around San Jose produce the finest vegetables in the world, as our markets, well supplied, abundantly testify, and when California shall have disenthralled herself of the immorality, the vice, and hordes of Mexican and Sydney villains,* as well as a sprinkling from other countries, this portion of it will be desirable as a home.

"In the early part of the winter of 1850...Sydney convicts began to arrive." *Across the Plains*, 157.

But now we are in a crisis, the result of which must bring ruin and misfortune to a multitude of individuals, though it may end in substantial benefit to the country. A failure in the mines, as well as a failure in the city, throws men upon their individual resources; 107 and as the best

business which has been followed the past season has been that of horticulture, thousands, by a natural impulse, are looking to Mother Earth for her bounty to replenish their pockets. This, of course, will develop the agricultural resources of the country, as well as find a permanent and industrious population employment. The country at this moment is overstocked with merchandise and provisions. In the mines, unless it may be in those most distant, there is more than can be sold during the winter; and this is the case in all the towns. Everything imported from the States is selling at a ruinous sacrifice, and as the *want* of rain in the mines prevents the dry diggings from being productive, less gold is obtained than was anticipated, a portion of which would go to pay for these goods. As soon as the upper towns and mines were supplied this fall, the price of many kinds of goods fell ninety per cent. Add to this the exorbitant rents demanded for any place to do business in, and you will not be surprised to hear of failures.

There seems to be a universal stagnation in trade, and although there may be millions to loan on good security, scarcely any businessman who is compelled to borrow can give the security required. A few days since I saw the invoice of a large lot of desirable goods for this market charged at Boston prices, and at higher rates than could be bought for here. Day before yesterday a finished house which had been sent out on speculation, which was said to have cost nearly four thousand dollars, was sold at auction to pay freight and brought eight hundred. This is a very common occurrence; and when a man wants to build, he watches his chance to find a vessel selling off a cargo of lumber at auction to pay charges. Beautiful crushed sugar is selling at 12 1/2 cts.; best quality of lard at 10 and 12 1/2 cts.; sugar-cured hams, in prime order, at 12 1/2 cts.; pickles in quart jars sold a few days since at $1.12 1/2 cts. per dozen. Arrivals of cargoes of merchandise are almost of daily occurrence, and we are advised that heavy shipments are on the way, so that I see no reason why this state of things may not continue for months to come.

I received, a few weeks since, a large consignment of goods to sell on commission, and I have hardly sold enough to get back the small advances which I made upon them. Men are resorting to new methods of disposing of stocks, chiefly fancy goods, and that is by lottery. Heavy amounts of rich jewelry, and even a public house, are offered for sale in this way, tickets selling for from one to five dollars. But one of the most recent humbugs which has been got up is the astonishing discovery

of Gold Bluff, up towards Klamath River. The very sand is so rich that it contains about one-tenth gold—so they say. A vessel has just returned from there with specimens of sand, but the company, instead of loading their ship down with the precious metal, have formed a joint stock company with a 108 capital of a hundred thousand dollars and are selling off shares at a hundred dollars a head. What fools—when they could have made so much more by a week's work in sifting gold at the Bluff—ahem! But fools are not all dead, and they are actually making large sales of shares. I have seen several gentlemen of intelligence who have visited the spot, who say that it is a ridiculous humbug.

A. D.

26. San Francisco, April 1, 1851.*

EDS. OF *Free Trader* —Don't you want to come to California? Don't you want to get rich? Do not the piles which we are taking out excite your acquisitiveness? Well, why don't you come? You read the papers and of course see the accounts of the new diggings daily discovered. And you occasionally see men returning with piles, and why can't you get it if they can? Let me see.

Free Trader, May 17, 1851.

The gold is here for a certainty; for a certainty new mines are found, and as certainly the papers report it; men go home, too, with money.

O, aye, it takes a confounded sight of labor and prison fare to look for the placers, and when you get your finger on it, the placer is displaced like the flea's whereabouts and—what amount actually do men bring home? You hear amounts variously estimated; but do you know—do they show you their piles? I have been sometimes amused with reports from your scandal-loving country of the sums which various men have the reputation of bringing home, when it leaks out here not unfrequently that for thousands you should read hundreds. Good Lord—why, I could show you on paper that I am worth from twenty to forty thousand dollars; but if I should show you the gold it might sink to tens. Paper currency is unknown in any other way only as State, county and city script, and that at

about sixty per cent. discount—but calculating a man's wealth here on paper generally proves at greater discount than city script.

We hope, however, that this fact will not be made known, and that the gold fever will continue; for we have lots of Indians to kill off and about six hundred miles of mountains to settle, and confidently expect an increase of at least twenty thousand souls to our population,* besides the usual mode of peopling new territories.

The influx of 1851 was well over twenty thousand, but less than that of each of the two preceding years. Bancroft, *History of California*, VII, 696. Cf. p.

If you come, don't bring any money; for what is the use when you can shovel it up? It will plague you to keep it when you do—that I 109 know to be a fact from experience. If you are determined to come, let me give you a few words of advice, so that you can pass muster and be respectable among us.

First, drink brandy; then learn to play at *monte*; become a member of some church; rob somebody to get your hand in; fill your pockets with bogus dollars; then slope* between two days, and you will be prepared to go into business immediately on your arrival without preliminary practice; and you no doubt will be appointed a judge or elected to some office. If you are not, stick to gambling till your turn comes. If you want some inferior business, you can get a silent partner—sometimes called a sleeping partner, though not always silent—and open a cigar store; and then with what you can steal, you will do something in the diggings. I have only to add that you will be in a great country, among a great people, and be one of us.

Run away.

For the last four months I have been a citizen of San Francisco. As I am a candidate for no office under the sun of California, I can safely say that my interests are not exclusively identified with those of the dear people, but no doubt would be with a fat office in perspective. As it is, I can't well do any other way than tell you the truth.

Well, then, San Francisco is a town such as I never saw before. There is a vast amount of intellect, science, and go-ahead-activeness in its mixed population, and I think it must become one of the most important cities on the Pacific so long as the mines continue productive, and they cannot be exhausted in a lifetime.

The climate is salubrious, and the country along the Coast is healthy; but dead animals in these latter days do emit an offensive effluvia, in spite of what it might have been in Mr. Bryant's times.

In sober prose I like San Francisco and the seacoast, and if my three especial reasons* were fairly domiciled here, I should prefer living here to any town east of the Rocky Mountains.

Wife and two children.

As for giving you a labored description of the town, I shan't do it; for you have read descriptions over and over in the papers, and then a bosom friend of mine—ycleped "Old Block," has "done the deed,"* and I hate to write what has been written over and over.*

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, II, ii, 15.
His "Pen Knife Sketches...by an Old Block" were appearing in the *Courier*. San Francisco *California Daily Courier*, June 21, 1851. Cf. *Pen-Knife Sketches*.

If you will get up a subscription and send me my three reasons, I won't come back at all, but will take a trip to the Celestials and give you sketches from China—as for that matter I could do it almost any day by looking from my office into the street; for we have 110 Chinese men and women as well as natives from all nations and some parts of the moon. The latter resemble the people of earth very much; only they have tails, wings, and are born with their clothes on, and generally fulfill their promises. For a particular description of these last, please see my journal when I go there, page 56.

Our citizens have been lately gratified with the sight of about a dozen Japanese who were picked up at sea in a shipwrecked condition, far from their native land, by an American ship and brought to this port. You know that Japan has been a sealed country to the world and but little is known of its customs. They resemble somewhat in appearance the Chinese; but there is a marked difference, and it is hoped their advent among us may lead to an intercourse with their nation. I was walking

along Long Wharf, one of the principal thoroughfares of our city, on Sunday, in company with a number of ladies and gentlemen, when we met them promenading. We mutually stopped to gaze at each other; the ladies especially attracted their attention, and they apparently seemed unable to determine to what class of humanity the countrywomen belonged, and, like my Indians last summer, appeared to ask each other, "What things those animals were?"—They appear to be an inquisitive but inoffensive race. They are treated with kindness and attention.

Had you received the first part of my journal* you would have learned of my first introduction to a somewhat remarkable man, Colonel Joseph S. Watkins, formerly of Virginia. In our trying transit across the plains, we became well acquainted with and formed a warm friendship for each other, and among the thousand petty annoyances of the journey calculated to engender ill-feeling, we had a mutual sympathy which an ignorant, agitatious, and self-willed class of our companions could not understand nor appreciate. I could give you many anecdotes of his goodness of heart and greatness of soul, and you would come to the conclusion that he is of the "salt of the earth," with but few like him. We parted on our arrival in the Valley, though with the expectation of soon meeting again; but this was prevented by a strangecourse of events, an interesting history in itself, and until within a few days we lost sight of each other. About three weeks ago I put a notice in the *Pacific News* inquiring of him.* This happily reached him in the southern mines, and he immediately addressed a letter to me, and two days ago I was gratified with a visit from him. A man who was an intimate friend of Jefferson and Marshall, who for a term of twenty-one years occupied a prominent station in the councils of Virginia, a man of large scientific and literary acquirements and of great experience in life, could not fail to be a useful and amusing companion, and 111 although he has not been successful as a millionaire, he is extensively known in California, respected for his talents, and beloved for his virtues.

Cf.p. 19.
Delano ran a business card in the San Francisco *Pacific News*, March 11-21, 1851.

The attention of Californians is beginning to be turned to quartz mining extensively, and so far as present prospects are concerned, it promises more certain return than any other mode of working gold. I do not choose to speak of it more particularly now, as much is experimental; but thus

far it has been generally successful. I have given my views upon the subject for publication to a gentleman from New York, both geologically and practically, and will not trouble you by a repetition.

Rich veins have been discovered, and I have traced one personally 150 miles. The only way these can be successfully worked is by the concentration of capital; individual labor can do but little.

My opinion is that here is the fountainhead of all the gold and that this species of mining will form for a hundred years to come the legitimate mining, and one of the principal sources of wealth, of California. Extraordinary developments have been made, and I may speak more particularly hereafter. I will, however, mention that it will cost from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars to open a mine and get it ready for practical mining, and science is necessary to be successful.

I forget what your laws and customs are at home. I know only the customs of the Pacific. Will you please inform me whether my wife is married again or not? If a man dines out here, he may find himself turned out of house and home when he comes back to tea, and is met in the door by the other husband to tell him his bread and butter “isn't as it used to was.”

A lady came here from the States to join her husband, who was at work in the mines. On her arrival, he dispatched a friend with funds to pay expenses and bring her up to his mountain home. Not hearing from them, “he went down into Egypt”* and found his friend married to his wife, and keeping house together. Like a sensible man, however, he went back to the mines and “tended tu what he was duin.”

Genesis *xlii* 2.

I could give you a list of the latest robberies and murders, but you will get enough by the papers which I send you by the steamers regularly.

I saw Keefer and Olmstead* a short time since—well and doing well. I see by a paper that Jesse Green has returned safe, for which I heartily rejoice; for a better man never crossed the plains, nor one whose success would give me more pleasure. I hope to take him by 112 the hand next fall. I

have not seen George Green. I heard he was hard at work, but with what success I did not learn. Direct all communications to me here.

John Olmstead, of Ottawa. He had a store at Placerville in December, 1849. *Free Trader*, February 23, 1850.

Yours truly,

A. DELANO.

27. Grass Valley, Nevada County, June 11, 1851.*

ONCE more in the mountains—once more among the everlasting hills of California, the land of circumstance and of adventure. How truly may it be said that "no man knoweth what the morrow may bring forth."* When I last descended from the snow-capped peaks of the Snowy Mountains,* I thought that it was for the last time and that that my weary feet would no more climb their dizzy heights, nor my tongue again be parched by burning thirst. But, alas, a life of ease is not for me, and, until the sun of life goes down, I may hardly hope for rest. Yet "hope on, hope ever," and in California even hope for heaven. The desire for wealth brought me here, and the weary search for gold hath made misery often my companion; yet although I have not been completely successful and have run many risks, I am not discouraged and will still plod on. Trade in the city became dull and fluctuating, and an opportunity occurring of selling out to advantage, it could not be neglected, for here you must go 113 with the current. Stemming it is destruction; so I closed for the time my "merchandise." About the same time the subject of quartz mining began to attract attention and my mining experience was sought. I examined a vein at Grass Valley, between Yuba and Bear rivers, made a favorable report, backed up by an offer to invest all I possessed in the world, and became a party in a quartz mining company. And this species of mining will be the text of my sermon.

True Delta, July 23, 1851
Cf. James iv: 14
Sierra Nevada

Through the whole extent of the California mountains veins of quartz extend which have been found to contain gold in veins, in many instances visible to the naked eye, and which, upon assay,

are found to yield astonishing results. It is believed generally that here is the matrix of gold and that from this source the gold of the gulches and streams comes by the decomposition of the rock as well as by being thrown out by volcanic force; and by the action of the elements it slides down to where it is found on the banks of streams and in low grounds. It is found in the rock from the finest particles, invisible to the naked eye, to that of spangles and in lumps such as are picked up in the gulch and river diggings.

In large masses of rock you trace a regular vein, generally in small spangles but sometimes in decayed or porous portions. It presents many fantastic shapes; I have seen it assume the shape of a tree, then of leaves, a heart, a human face, &c., &c., These veins of quartz vary in thickness from that of a knife-blade to three feet, and a few score feet may exhibit these changes; but twelve to eighteen inches may be a kind of maximum. They seem to have been forced up through strata of slate or of gray granite, which often present an appearance of decomposition. Sometimes they are in proximity with hornblende. Occasionally the quartz is found decomposed, and in its stead is a rich gravel and earth which yields from ten cents to five, ten, even fifty dollars to the pan. Gold Tunnel, at Nevada City, is of this character.

By the politeness of G.S. McMakin, Esq., one of the proprietors of that rich mine, I was enabled to make a thorough inspection of their tunnel. It lays in a small ravine worn by water and is, perhaps, sixty feet above the bed of Deer Creek, which flows at its base. In sinking a shaft for the purpose of coyote digging in October last, they struck the vein of quartz which was mostly decomposed, and in December they commenced a regular tunnel to follow the vein. The vein is of a reddish or iron brown, but all the earth which is excavated appears to be extremely rich.—Mr. McMakin took about half a pound of dirt indiscriminately in a pint cup from the side of the mine in my presence, and without using much care in washing, it had fifty cents, and in 1 15-16 of dirt in another instance he found two dollars and eighty cents. They have followed the vein an hundred and ten feet, and it is now about three feet thick, with a dip of forty-five degrees to the east. The base and surrounding rock is 114 gray granite, partially decomposed. Occasionally a large boulder is found through which they blast. They are following the vein, not downward, but horizontally. There are other tunnels

at Nevada City, but none so rich as this have been discovered, and in some the vein has not been struck.

At Grass Valley, five miles below Nevada City, are probably the most extensive quartz mining operations that exist at this moment in California. Late last fall a layer of quartz was struck in sinking a shaft for coyote digging on the top of a hill, since called Gold Hill, which was found to contain a large deposit of gold. The quartz here seems to lay in slabs and boulders as if it had been raised and a mass of earth, falling in, filled the cavity, leaving the quartz near the surface; and consequently, although there is a large quantity of ore, there is not a regular vein, unless at a greater depth than it has been prospected. Across a small ravine south, and perhaps eighty rods distant from Gold Hill, is Massachusetts Hill, where the Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company is located.*

Delano was a member of this company.

On this hill the last-named company are in active operation and are opening their mine scientifically so that it may be worked for years. Here they struck a well-defined vein four inches thick and which increased in richness and thickness as they proceeded down, when at the depth of sixty feet the vein was eighteen inches thick, the dip being to the east at an angle of forty-five degrees. At this depth they came to water, but the vein can be followed north and south above the water. They then commenced a tunnel at the base of the hill about an hundred and fifty feet below its apex, and had proceeded only twenty feet when they struck what is supposed to be a lateral vein twelve inches thick of the same character of earth as at Gold Tunnel at Nevada City. They are continuing the tunnel through this vein in the direction of the vein which they must reach within two hundred feet.

You may judge something of the character of the vein when I tell you that they employed from five to twenty men at an expense of five dollars per day in prospecting—have dug at least four hundred feet, and probably nine tenths of the labor in opening the mine has been unproductive of revenue; yet they have paid all expenses of labor, board and tools, and acquisition of working territory from the mine itself, by crushing pieces of quartz by hand in a mortar and washing *without quicksilver*, and have at this moment ten thousand dollars' worth of rock and rich earth raised (estimating it at thirty dollars per ton, the price paid at the mills) clear of expense.

The mines in that vicinity do not sell their richest specimens to the crushing mills. It is only the refuse rock or that in which gold is not visible to the naked eye. The rich specimens the miners crush themselves by hand, and these yield one to ten dollars, and even 115 two ounces to the pound. Indeed, I have one piece weighing nine ounces avoirdupois which, by estimating its specific gravity, contains three ounces of gold.

I will at some convenient opportunity send you a specimen. One of the specimens weighing fourteen pounds, from this vein, containing over six hundred dollars, was sold to go to the World's Fair,* after being shown in New York. A year ago there was but a single shanty at Grass Valley; now there are two hundred wood houses, good hotels, stores, a sawmill, four steam crushing mills in operation, and four more in active progress of erection, and vast quantities of rock piled up ready for use. New veins, or rather new openings of the vein, are continually made, and it appears to be uniformly rich as a general thing, though some placers are richer than others. The mills in operation are too light and too imperfect. They should be not less than twenty horsepower, with stampers weighing two hundred and fifty to five hundred each. Those now operating are of from ten to twelve horsepower engines, with stampers weighing about one hundred pounds, though heavy mills are being erected. One by Walsh, Esq., is of sixty horsepower and no doubt will be effective. But the greatest difficulty is in saving the gold; not more than one fifth is extracted or saved. The general average saved by the mills is five cents to the pound in the refuse rock. Repeated experiments have shown that four fifths of the gold is lost and that there is much more in the quartz which is passed off at the mill than is saved. This subject is occupying the attention of scientific men here, and I hope it will at home. But a small part will amalgamate with quicksilver; if fire is applied, no flux is known which may be reduced to extensive practical use, and if dissolved by acids, the expense of the latter absorbs all the profits. A new era in gold-digging seems to have arisen. Although surface digging is still carried on with its usual labor and disappointments, with its very few successful ones, the mode of washing the earth has steadily improved and dirt that at first would not be touched with the pan is often made very profitable with the sluice. But the developments made in the quartz veins seem to make it as certain here as mining in Peru, Chile or Mexico, where mines have been worked for more than two hundred years, and it is thought that

capital may be as safely invested in this species of mining as in railroad, factory or bank stock, in shipping, farming or merchandise. But this requires capital to commence with. Individual labor and poor machinery amounts to nothing and must, in general, prove a failure. To open a mine properly it may cost twenty thousand dollars, though in some instances by good luck, two thousand dollars may strike the vein; and then to purchase the requisite machinery thirty to forty thousand dollars more may be required before a dollar is returned, but 116 by an expense of two or three thousand dollars a vein may be prospected and a degree of certainty arrived at which will justify a farther expenditure. I append a calculation predicated upon *what is actually done* at some of the mines at Grass Valley. I will take a twelve-horsepower engine with poor crushers and imperfect machinery and exorbitant wages as a basis:

The first international exhibition, at the Crystal Palace, London, 1851.

10 tons crushed in 24 hours is 20,000 lbs.

Yield per pound 5c.

Total per day $1,000.00

Expenses.

20 men at $10 per day, men

boarding themselves $200

Wear and tear and extras 100— 300.00

Profit $ 700.00

One year, say days 300

$210,000.00

Leaving a profit of two hundred and ten thousand dollars per year. Men can be hired at from three to five dollars per day; and with proper machinery thirty and forty tons of rock can be crushed as well as ten, which, of course, increases your profits. Now, instead of estimating the yield at five cents make it one half or two and one half cents, and you will find you are doing rather a snug cash business; and then hit upon some method of saving all the gold, and instead of two and one half cents to the pound, you will have from fifteen to twenty-five cents at least.

God forbid that I should mislead anyone on this subject. I have suffered too much myself to wish even a dog to endure what I have but I desire to give my countrymen the truth and the benefit of my experience without my hardships. It is an impression gaining favor here that quartz mining will become a legitimate business of California as much as woolgrowing in the Western States, and I confess that I am compelled to adopt that opinion from what I have seen. I have personally traced this vein by outcrops and excavations more than a hundred and fifty miles, and feel confident of its extent. It passes through the country in a southeast and northwest direction, following the main direction of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the general dip is to the east at an angle of forty-five degrees. There are evidences of silver in quantities, but I defer that subject until my information is more definite, although I have seen beautiful specimens of pure metal that had been melted like the lumps of gold which we find.

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The awful fire at San Francisco has beggared hundreds and ruined thousands.* I, too, come in for my share of loss and at present can only say as the fellow did when the saddle turned and threw him into the mud, “just like my d——d luck.”

This was the fifth “great fire.” Soulé *et al., Annals*, 329.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO.

28. San Francisco, June 13, 1851.*

FRIENDS OSMAN—I was most agreeably surprised by a visit from my friend Dr. Hall, who is on his way home. If I can rejoice at the success of any man, it is at his, for one of a better heart or more moral honesty I never met. He is one who returns unscathed by the vices of California and is the same here as at home. He is among those who are entitled to my best regards, and I cordially hope that his last days may be prosperous and happy.

Free Trader, August 9, 1851.

I wish you would tell McNeil to write me, for in our long sojourn together, in the hour of trial and amid danger and difficulty, I learned to appreciate his kindness and good will. Oh! how I should love to sit down with some of those old returned Californians and while away an hour or two in talking over our travels along the Nemahas, the Platte, the plains, the desert, the cañons, and the mountains. I could almost come on purpose to see Captain George Green and the brave old pioneer, his father, and other good men and true who suffered the perils of that arduous trip. You see my heart is expanding towards them, and I can't help giving utterance to my feelings.

As your country is great for reports, I have been amused—not offended—at one I have recently heard respecting myself and to this effect, “that Delano provided nothing for his family when he left home, that he had sent them nothing since he has been here, and that he traveled across the plains with another woman.” As to the first two, it may spoil a good story when I refer the lovers of the dark side to my own family for the truth of the two first counts, and for the third, I simply ask those who traveled in our train to state the facts. As for women, I did save the life of one here in San Francisco, and gave her shelter and protection after the fire for two or three days, until she got a situation with Captain Sutter's family at one thousand dollars a year; and could you hear her story, it would be that of respect, and that even here a *man* may do a *good* deed 118 which he may not blush to own. Except this one, who by circumstances was thrown upon my protection by a course of events—an interesting tale of itself—when a man should blush *not* to do as I did, and when I was encouraged by pious and good people of both sexes, there are not three other females in California that even know my name; and I do not blush, nor need any of my friends blush for any act of mine

since I have been in this God-forsaken land, nor will they have occasion to. I feel that it is scarcely necessary for me to speak a word in defense of myself, and I drop the subject.

We are in the midst of certainly a moral and nearly a political revolution. The outrages upon the order-loving people have been so great—so many murders, robberies, and incendiary conflagrations have been committed, not only here but throughout California, and so wretchedly has the law been administered, that the people have arisen in their might to *protect themselves*.

Since the great fire, eight different palpable attempts have been made to fire the city. It is no longer safe to walk the streets after dark unarmed, and we do not know when we lay down at night but that before the morning sun our dwellings may be burnt to ashes. The magistrates and police cannot execute the laws if they would. Lawyers are found who will make the technicalities and subtleties of the law subservient to the horde of villains who are in our midst, to screen them from justice. The penal colonies of Great Britain are emptying their hordes of convicts upon our shores, and every arrival from Sydney swells the number by hundreds. A mass meeting was held on the Plaza yesterday—another today, and another will be held tomorrow, to adopt some measures to protect ourselves and check the crime that is carrying murder and desolation to our citizens in their dwellings. This is no fancy sketch. Ask any man who is returning from California—he will attest its truth.

A man was caught in the act of setting fire to the city a few days ago. He is in the hands of the law *and will escape*.* Night before last a man was caught with a safe which he had stolen. He was seized, tried by the citizens fairly and impartially, found guilty, and hung before daylight.*

On June 3, 1851, Benjamin Lewis underwent a preliminary examination on the charge of arson; his indictment was twice quashed for “defects” and he was released. Soulé *et al., Annals*, 340-341.
On June 10 John Jenkins stole a safe from a store on Long Wharf. At midnight the Vigilance Committee hanged him. *Ibid*., 570.

There are thousands upon the Plaza today, and with a small exception, the feeling of self-defense was the ruling one. A few attempted to stem the popular current, and a gang of bullies and rowdies attempted to put down the movement on the part of the people, and at one time there were

indications of a severe fight. But the people triumphed—resolutions passed which amounted to little 119 else than revolution, and tomorrow another mass meeting is to be held.

All men regret that the exigencies of the case demand the stormy interposition of the people to punish crime, but lamentable as it is, the case is necessary. No man has ever been legally executed for murder in San Francisco, and but two in the State,* out of the hundreds committed. In one of the cases alluded to it was for a cool unprovoked murder of an influential citizen. The culprit was condemned to be hung, but the Governor (McDougal) gave him a respite and then a full pardon, but the people broke into the jail and executed the just sentence themselves.* Some forty persons have been murdered here since last fall, and every murderer has escaped. You can form but little idea of the actual state of things, but Dr. Hall can tell you more than I have time to write.

Bancroft lists fifteen executions in the State during the first nine months of its existence, but which, if any, were strictly legal is not now discoverable. *Popular Tribunals* (2 vols., San Francisco, 1887), I, 155-171.
Hamilton McCauley was tried, convicted of murder, and sentenced to death by the Napa court of sessions in March, 1851, the execution to take place on May 15. Governor McDougal sent a reprieve, but it failed to arrive in time to prevent the hanging. *Ibid*., I, 166-170. John McDougal (1818-1866), second governor of California, was a “gentlemanly drunkard, and democratic politician of the order for which California was destined to become somewhat unpleasantly notorious.” Bancroft, *History of California*, VI, 645.

The city is nearly rebuilt since the fire. I am once more in my old office—rather, in a new one, where the old one stood. I find my actual loss by the fire was a little over twelve hundred dollars, but as luck would have it, it didn't break me. It came a little hard, as it was money loaned out.—Quartz mining is still good and will be for ages.

Business, I mean merchandising, is good for nothing. Goods are lower than in New York—even in the mines it does not pay as a general thing. Men dare not employ capital, and there is neither confidence nor credit.

I am writing out my journal as I get leisure, and although I have not determined to publish it, I may conclude to do so eventually.*

It was published in part in the *Free Trader*, February 8-9, 1850, and in full as *Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings*, 1854. Cf. p. 19.

After leaving the Humboldt we were in a country but little known, and almost every day presented something new and strange. I saw in a number of the *Free Trader* that a regular trade had sprung up between San Francisco and Sydney in importing women who are sold at public auction. This is certainly news to us. No such thing has happened since I have been a resident of the city, and all I can learn about it is that about a year ago some females were brought from Sydney, and by their own consent their time was sold by the Captain long enough to pay their passage. I send you a 120 *Courier* (Daily) which contains a Pen Knife Whittling—the last number.* —I am writing hurriedly, as you perceive.

The San Francisco *California Daily Courier*, June 21, 1851, carried “Pen Knife Sketches—2d Series, No. 5, By an Old Block.” But earlier numbers are unavailable.

I can't tell when I shall come home. Perhaps your newsmongers will have me married again soon, and then you know I shall not dare come. There are many of your citizens for whom I entertain warm feelings of friendship, and I hope to take them by the hand within a year.—I'm growing garrulous and will close.

Truly yours,

A. DELANO

29. Grass Valley, Sierra Nevada Quartz Mines, June 29, 1851.*

Climate, &c.—I'm going to give a lecture. Please be seated and attend respectfully to the speaker. I am about to make some experiments, my dear hearers (or readers), for your edification, and you will of course follow my directions in order that your understanding may be properly enlightened with regard to the subject before us. Climate, then, the first matter for our consideration, is bounded on the West by Sacramento City. Wheugh! who ever heard of climate being a geographical discovery before?—attention! then—no interruption. We do up things in California to suit ourselves, and the Lord knows some of 'em are antagonistic to all natural and human laws. If we freeze in San Francisco and sweat in the Valley of the Sacramento, it is our privilege to do so. I

am now in the sweat region and am about giving you its boundaries according to my discoveries. Climate, then, is bounded on the North by the Cascade and Pit River Mountains; on the East by Nevada City, Auburn, and that line of hills; on the South by Mount Diablo, and how much further I can't tell, as I have only been to the Devil—I meant the Devil's Mountain. It has been a mooted point whether the sun is hot or cold, but it is generally allowed that the sun makes the climate warm. In California there are two causes—first, big fires underground—second, the sun overhead—and by climbing Mount Diablo just beyond Sacramento City in a hot day, you will see that the sun is a red-hot mass that sends his burning rays hizzing and fizzing from above to meet the steam and internal heat of the fires under the Valley of the Sacramento, so that the climate here is between two fires, and would you experiment on the warmth of this climate? 121 Well, take off your coat—"good"—now your vest—"very well"—slip off your pants—"ridiculous"—off with your shirt—" *git out*"—why, the natives do it here—now go to a baker's oven just as he is putting in his bread, and crawl in, and you'll not only be done brown but get a pretty correct idea of the climate about these days in this part of California. At this blessed moment I am setting in my nice log cabin breathing the hot pure mountain air of this pleasant location, divested of all covering except shirt and pants and I wish they were off—and my handkerchief is doing duty manfully, but hang me if it can dry up the streams that course o'er my brows.

True Delta, August 6, 1851.

Now for the "and so forth." The determination of the people in the cities to protect themselves against the lawless gangs of desperados who are bringing ruin upon the whole country is extending itself to the mining districts. Sensible that such felons will take refuge in the mines when an asylum is no longer afforded them in the cities, the miners are associating for the purpose of punishing crime, and Vigilance Committees are organizing. One was formed here last night, and we are ready to pay our respects to all scoundrels who may be inclined to pay us a visit. Repugnant as this course is to Americans who are brought up in the school of law and order, there is no other way to save our lives and to protect our property, for the technicalities of the law have been perverted to screen the guilty and protect them in their career of crime so long that nothing is left but a resolution in fact to put the law into the hands of the people to protect themselves. You will learn by the public prints the infamous use made of the pardoning power by Governor McDougal in granting a full and free

pardon to a murderer, a wanton and deliberate murderer.* It is but a sample of the manner in which the law has been administered by those entrusted with its execution.

Cf. p. 119

I am cognizant of all the transactions of the people at San Francisco, having taken an active part in some of the public meetings there; yet I leave a description of them to others. I am now at work on my claim in the mountains. The condition of things is lamentable in other ways than the disorders of judicial proceedings. Business is nearly at a stand. By the late fires thousands are completely ruined and thrown out of employment.* Those who can stand the sun and severe labor go to the mines, but there are many, very many, who are unused to labor and although they may have the will, do not possess the strength and are in vain seeking employment. At this time the best business and literary talent can be employed in San Francisco for their board. Indeed, I know men of ability, of honesty, and of good morals, who could not even get that, and have not money either to live on or to get out of town. I 122 never wanted to be rich so much in my life as since the fire. Rich, humph! Do you know that Colonel Grant has become a prophet? He had the impudence to declare to Dr. Morse* the other day that I never would be rich. The only thing I care about the prophecy is it's truth. Well, I can't steal, and if I can't get rich without, I shall enjoy the company of two Californians who can “Teach me to feel another's woe,”*

and Grant re-Morse for my sins of omission—eh, Colonel—? Let's see, where was I? O, talking about business. It is but little better in the mines than in the cities. Goods and provisions are abundant and cheap, affording but little profit. So many have rushed into trade that profits are cut down to little more than a living, and although mining is uncertain, yet at this moment it is, in my opinion, the surest business of the country. Agriculture is attended to, and where land can be irrigated very good crops are raised. I think there will be potatoes enough raised very nearly to supply the demand.

The sixth “great fire” occurred June 22, 1851. Soulé *et al., Annals*. 345.
Dr. John Frederick Morse (1815-1874), physician, editor of the Sacramento *Union*, and local historian. San Francisco *Alta California*, December 31, 1874.
Pope, *The Universal Prayer*.

Many places are found in the mountains—the foothills—which can be cultivated, for the mountain streams afford the means of irrigation. One of our company has 160 acres enclosed, and we are eating lettuce and radishes of his raising, and his potatoes are doing well. Indian corn has a bilious look, but barley and wheat thrive well. I think it possible to raise potatoes enough in the mountains to supply the miners. If this is ever done, it will cut off one great item of trade below.

A general meeting of quartz miners is called to be held at Sacramento City on the 2d of July, for the purpose of agreeing on some general regulations respecting the amount of territory which a man may hold.* This call is not responded to by all of the quartz districts. In some the laws are just and liberal, founded upon equity, and the utmost harmony reigns, as is the case here. It is thought that each district can make its own laws, which will apply better to its own locality than any general law. Here, the laws are made and allow a man to hold by preemption one hundred square feet of quartz ground, but he may purchase and hold for the purpose of running machinery, or for working actually, any number of claims within reason. To change this law might do much injustice to those who have made improvements or who have bought claims for the purpose of working crushing mills, and as all are satisfied now, our 123 people have determined to let well enough alone and not go into convention. This community is an orderly, peaceable and quiet one. There are seven crushing mills in operation, and many people at work. There are many scientific, literary and well-educated gentlemen among them, and several families are located here. We have a daily stage and mail passing through from Sacramento City to Nevada City, although a year ago a road was not opened, and the Indians were killing and driving off the whites. And lastly, I want to tell you a true story and conclude. Just before the great fire I was coming up here on foot; I took a cut across the mountains by a trail which led me several miles from any settlement. Passing along a dark and deep ravine which was as still and silent as the grave, I suddenly came upon the remains of an old camp where had stood a solitary and isolated miner's tent. In one corner I saw, partly covered with dirt, the remains of a newspaper, and prompted by curiosity I carefully uncovered it and looking at the head, saw that it read *California True Delta*. Comment is unnecessary, but I *know* how that poor fellow felt when he was poring over its pages in that lonely spot.

The miners met and on July 3 passed a resolution limiting each claim on “the lead” to three hundred feet for the claimant and 150 feet for each partner. Sacramento *Union*, July 4, 1851.

A. DELANO.

30. San Francisco, August 1, 1851.*

WHEN THE history of California shall be written, after time has mellowed the asperities of passing events, the occurrences of the present day will form a singular but strange chapter for the perusal of the statesman and philanthropist, as well as the bookworm. In a country whose people are proverbial for their love of justice and order, where the force of early education and of public example has tended to the observance of the law for the preservation of order and the protection of those rights which belong to free citizens, a state of things exists which borders upon anarchy and threatens to dissolve the social compact of the community; in fact, they have already arrived at the point where strong individual combinations are required to protect life and property from organized bands of desperadoes and heartless men who have made the existing laws an instrument to protect them in crime and high-handed villainy. If this state of things existed in a single town, city, or district, the evil could be corrected by the law itself, but strange to say the whole length and breadth of California is so beset with unprincipled men who set law, order and justice alike at defiance, or make use of the 124 first, by its technicalities, to subvert the others, that a revolution has become necessary for the protection of rights and at this moment exists in progress throughout the State. On every side is suspicion and distrust of men and authorities. In the cities, as well as in the mountain wilds, it is unsafe for men to go unarmed, and particularly after nightfall; and even in thoroughfares in the largest towns, men are compelled to take the middle of the street, fearful that the first man they meet may be an assassin or robber with a slung shot or pistol. For a long time this was patiently endured. That reverence for existing law which is almost an intuitive feeling with Americans endured there, to await its action, in the hope that its just administration would rid society of its pests and excrescences; but when at length it was seen that the executive itself, if not in actual collusion with crime, pardoned it in its most glaring deformity; that criminals almost universally escaped punishment; that in more than two hundred murders in less than a year

but a single legal execution had taken place in the whole State,* that the police force was wholly inefficient and sometimes even connected with the commission of crime; that witnesses notoriously perjured themselves to screen their companions in guilt and prove an alibi; that public officers were guilty of peculation and malfeasence; and that for the guilty to be in any event condemned to prison was only affording an easy mode to escape punishment by the insecurity of the jails and the negligence of the jailors; in short, when it was found that under the administration of the law the insecurity of life and property increased instead of diminished, the people became aroused to a sense of their own wrongs and, convinced that there was no other mode of redress, resolved to take the punishment of their aggressors into their own hands, not in opposition to law and order, but to aid the law to do what of itself it could not do, protect the honest part of the community. Not a morning paper appeared in San Francisco that did not herald the perpetration of some robbery or murder the previous night in the city, and it was the same from the mines and different parts in the whole country. In distant counties, goaded on to desperation by repeated acts of violence, the citizens occasionally tumultuously arose and seized the perpetrator, when the constituted authorities would interfere, generally with success, and the criminal almost invariably would escape punishment, till at length it became a byword and reproach when an arrest was made: “He will escape by the law.” Up to the present moment, although within the past year at least forty murders have been committed in San Francisco and its immediate vicinity, there has never been a legal execution. In several glaring cases the perpetrators were admitted to merely nominal bail, without the ceremony of incarceration, and were free to continue their assaults 125 and depredations. Incendiarism was so common that whenthe citizenlaid down at night, his papers and valuables, as well as clothes, were placed in a situation where they could be seized at a moment's warning, and the thought was constant that before daylight should appear he might be a houseless, homeless, ruined man. These things could no longer be endured. Self-preservation rendered it imperative that the first law of nature should be observed, and that unless some united effort was made, society must resolve itself into its primitive elements and brute force be the only defense against aggression and violence. Every ship from the penal colonies of Great Britain only added numbers to the English convicts already here, while the vicious of all nations seemed by instinct to find a rendezvous on our shores, so that California contained hordes of the most accomplished villains

who had passed through every grade of crime and were prepared to practice their infernal arts upon the honest and industrious part of the community at the moment of their arrival. Under this state of things an association was organized in San Francisco, composed of its best and most prominent citizens, which soon swelled to a thousand, encouraged and approved by nine tenths of the whole community, who were determined to bring palpable offenders to prompt and speedy justice.

True Delta, September 16, 1851.
Cf. p. 119.

Their first act was to take into custody a thief who was caught in the act of stealing a safe. He was fairly tried before a jury immediately summoned, full proof of guilt was adduced, and without noise or parade he was taken to the plaza about midnight and hung on the piazza of the Adobe.*

This was the Jenkins affair. Cf. p. 118. The "Adobe" was the Custom House on the northwest corner of Portsmouth Plaza. Soulé *et al., Annals*, 255, 343, 571.

The second day after, a public meeting was called at which thousands of citizens were assembled, who, with but one single dissenting voice (from a lawyer), ratified by vote the acts of the Vigilance Committee (as it was called).*

At the meeting, held June 11, H. K. Clarke "almost alone" protested against the Committee's actions. San Francisco *Alta California*, June 12, 1851.

A second meeting took place the following day at which a series of resolutions were introduced, the object of which was to sustain the Committee in purifying the city from the pest of society and censuring the uncertain and tardy administration of justice by the officers of the law. An attempt was made to prevent the passage of these resolutions by a prominent member of the Legislature, backed up by a gang of rowdies and gamblers whom he had rallied around him and who endeavored to interfere with the meeting by violent and unfair means. But the resolutions passed by overwhelming acclamation.* —A revolution had in fact taken place.

On June 12 David C. Broderick (1820-1859), President of the State Senate (later U. S. Senator from California), effectively led the opposition to the Committee, but its actions were finally endorsed the next day. *Ibid*, June 13-14, 1851; "Broderick," *Dictionary of American Biography*.

The Vigilance Committee were looked upon as the true purifiers of society, instead of the courts; yet in no case did the former impede the acts of the latter in its administration of justice; its only aim was to punish speedily those who were not secured by the police, without going through with the technicalities of the law, its insecurity and uncertainty; and yet they punished no criminal without a fair trial, without full and positive proof of guilt. The effect of this association was speedily felt. After the execution of Jenkins, numbers of known thieves and burglars left the city, and the Recorder's dock, instead of being filled every morning with criminals, fell off at once to a few cases of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Determined to effect a thorough renovation, the Committee gave notice to notorious villains to leave the city in five days, and when they refused to obey, they were seized and placed in durance until they could be sent out of the country. Ships from the penal colonies were boarded and the characters of the passengers enquired into, and when they were satisfactorily proven to be convicts, they were not suffered to land, but compelled to return in the same vessel which brought them out. As a matter course there was opposition to the measures of the Vigilance Committee. The constituted authorities, sworn to administer the law (which, even if willing, they had been unable to do), looked upon these acts of the Committee as a breach of the law; the gamblers, thieves, their aiders and abettors, their counselors, who were deriving a revenue in shielding them from justice, weak men who had but little at stake or who could be influenced by the specious reasoning of those directly interested in opposing justice and speedy punishment, formed a party in opposition to the people, for the Vigilance Committee was now the only recognized organ of the people as a body.—Yet in spite of the remonstrances of the Courts, the maligners of those interested, and the doubts of the weak, the Committee steadily persevered in their work, and a feeling of security began to be felt which had not been done for a year and a half before. Even the pulpit came forward to the rescue, and ministers of the gospel were heard from the sacred desk to approve of the acts of the Vigilance Committee, under the peculiar circumstances of the case. The example of San Francisco was speedily followed in all other towns in California, and Vigilance Committees were formed even in the mountains, at nearly every extensive digging, and at this moment, while the constituted authorities are endeavoring to throw impediments in the way of these Committees, thus indirectly encouraging the commission of crime which they cannot

punish, these associations are calmly and steadily pursuing their object, and are restoring a degree of confidence in the community which has not been felt for many months.

In addition to other benefits, these associations have had the 127 effect of instigating the Courts to renewed energy and more prompt execution of law and of justice; and when the time shall arrive that there is sufficient honesty and power in the Courts to faithfully discharge their duties in repressing crime and bring offenders to justice, they will at once resign the right of arrogating to themselves the power of punishing the guilty and leave it with those whose duty it is to protect the honest against fraud and violence.

By the indefatigable energy of the Vigilance Committee a notorious robber was arrested, and the proof was so satisfactory that he was condemned to death. Previous to his execution, Stuart confessed his crimes,* and brought to light what had long been suspected, that organized bands of desperadoes existed,* that certain lawyers were engaged to protect them with the chicanery of the law, and men of standing were implicated as aiders and abettors in their nefarious practices. Upon the execution of Stuart in open day at the instance of the committee, the authorities expressed themselves as being highly indignant of what they termed an outrage (on what?—their authority? —certainly not on justice). A grand jury was impaneled at the instance of the Judge,* who charged them that an awful outrage had been committed in thus hanging a man contrary to law, although the felon had confessed himself guilty of the blackest crimes, and they were directed to bring in a true bill of indictment. The Mayor,* too, came out with a proclamation on the subject, but the Committee, disregarding those impotent offerings of spleen, calmly and deliberately pursued the even tenor of their way,* determined that justice *should* overtake the guilty.

James Stuart, arrested for murder and robbery, was hanged by the Vigilance Committee on the Market Street Wharf, July 11, 1851. Soulé *et al., Annals*, 314-315, 368, 578-582.
Justice Alexander Campbell (1820-1911) of the county court of sessions. San Francisco *Alta California*, June 13, 1851; *Chronicle*, July 7, 1911.
Charles J. Brenham (1817-1875). San Francisco *Alta California*, July 12, 1851; May 11, 1875; Soulé *et al., Annals*, 735-739.
Gray, *Elegy*.

On the 4th of July at Nevada City, a young man whom I had known many years told me that he was offered seven hundred dollars a month to steal mules, horses and cattle. It is needless to say that he indignantly refused.

A few days ago at Sacramento City, a young man just from the mines, named Wilson, was robbed in open daylight by four desperadoes who decoyed him to an unfrequented part of the city. An alarm was raised, and in half an hour the robbers were in the hands of the Vigilance Committee. The authorities interfered and promised most solemnly that they should be tried immediately without delay, and they were finally given up. It became known the following day that the trial had been postponed four days by the interference of the lawyers, when the people assembled and in a determined manner called upon the executors of the law to redeem their promises, and told them decidedly that unless they proceeded at once with the trial, they would take the prisoners themselves. Seeing that the people were not to be put off with promises, they then went 128 on with the examination *according to law*, and a week has been dragged along, during which one has been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, two to be hung, and one remains to be tried. The testimony is positive, as the robbery was witnessed by several individuals; yet, had not the Courts been urged on by the people, weeks would have, in all probability, been consumed; and it is not at all improbable that the villains might have escaped.*

James Wilson was robbed of two hundred dollars on July 9, and the next day William Robinson, John Thompson, James Gibson, and Owen Cruthers were indicted. A Vigilance Committee was organized, July 11. A jury convicted Robinson, July 15. Robinson, Gibson, and Thompson were sentenced to death, July 20. All three were hanged, August 22. Sacramento *Union*, July 10-12, 16, 21, August 23, 1851.

And such is the present condition of California. With a beautiful climate, abounding in the elements of wealth and of comfort, it is on the verge of anarchy from the imbecility of its rulers; and were it not for the stern determination of the honest part of community to rid the country of its hideous excrescences, it would soon resolve into the primitive condition of society when justice and protection could only be given by the power of the sword and the will of the strong. You will think the picture too highly drawn. You will think I am excited. On the contrary, I am of a dispassionate temperament, and the portrait may be judged by every public account which you receive through the press, as well as at the hands of returning Californians.

Yours,

A. D.

31. Sacramento City, August, 6, 1851.*

GENTLEMEN: I find my time so much occupied that I shall be unable to continue my correspondence with your paper and of course must relinquish all claim on you for sending your paper either to me or to my friends on my account.—Since the fire of the 4th of May,* I have been, like thousands of others, a gentleman loafer, living on the glories which were left after the fire had done its worst and thinking what I would do if I was a *respectable* man—that is, 129 if I had money. As a man's merit is chiefly measured by the fullness of his purse, my claim to the high consideration of my countrymen is only moderate; but I console myself with the pleasing reflection that I care but devilish little about it. I have just read two numbers of the *Free Trader* and a letter written by Mr. Gum to Mr. Keefer, by which I see that you are blessed with floods, scarcity of money, office seekers, and high life below stairs* in various ways. The conclusion that we come to here is that no man knows anything unless he has been to California, for we are about fifty years ahead in knowledge to you poor deluded mortals at home. When we see you chaffering and higgling about a few cents in county operations or a half a cent in the price of coal, it looks mighty small, and the conclusion we come to is that you are a picayune people.

Free Trader, September 27, 1851.
At San Francisco.
Cf. *High Life Below Stairs*, a popular farce by James Townley, first produced in London, 1759.

Why, I haven't seen but one copper cent since I have been in this country and that gave me the diarrhea. I gave the fellow two bits to throw it away. A strange convulsion of nature has recently occurred here. The mountains have all turned into gold, and instead of digging as was formerly the case, and living on pork and bread, all you have to do is to load up a wagon with rock and dine on mush and milk which fill the gulches. I've written truth so much before that I can afford to lie a little now. Well, now in sober earnest, the streams are so low that the beds can be worked to advantage, and a vast amount of gold will be taken out, more than in any previous season. The quartz mining is becoming profitable and begins to be worked systematically—$1,520 was taken from one mine

last week.—All of our company have sold out except myself. They call the trade thirty thousand dollars. I still hold on with the new company and am to superintend the mining for three hundred dollars per month. I intended to have come home this fall, but as I want fifteen barrels of gold, I must wait till spring. I have but little idea of ever coming back to live, and somehow the conviction is forced upon my imagination that I have a good chance here. But let me tell you one thing, boys, if you come here to get rich, you will have to look the elephant square in the face in some shape or other.

I intend to get married next week; I have bribed two sheriffs and four auctioneers to buy a woman or two at the first auction sale of livestock. Would you like a few dozen? They are of but little account here, and although there is quite a rush of them from the States, they will find the market glutted and will be compelled to work for a living at from fifty to a hundred dollars per month on their arrival. They had better stay at home. The squaws have vastly improved the Bloomer dresses. From neck to heels they wear only a small grass apron. This they say does not impede the free use of their limbs and is much more comfortable in hot weather; besides 'tain't half the 130 trouble to dress and undress.—Pshaw! what's the use of dictating to women what dress they shall wear? They'd do as they please anyhow. I intend to let all my wives take their own way and thereby save myself a hatchelling.

Murder, robberies and gambling is on the wane. The glorious Vigilance Committees are teaching the courts their duty, and order is coming out of chaos and confusion.

Had Milton lived now he would have placed the scene of the grand combat in California; at all events his devils would have found plenty of ammunition here.

There is no suffering on the plains this year so far. But '49 and '50 will afford a thrilling theme for some future historian. Saw Keefer just now—he is doing well, and I am glad of it. He is an energetic, industrious man, and has the milk of human kindness in his veins. I saw Pete Hoes at Grass Valley last week—is doing nothing, and probably will not.* I haven't got to drinking, stealing or gambling yet, but expect to commence in a day or two.

Peter Hoes, of Ottawa. He was reported to have been in San Francisco in September, 1849. *Free Trader*, December 7, 1849.

There is lots of news, but the papers have it all, and letter-writers are getting below par.—Money is scarce and taters is fell.*

Le., fallen in price.

Yours, &c.,

A. DELANO.

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32. Grass Valley, August 30, 1851.*

ONCE more a miner—once more a delver in earth in search of its hidden treasures. Speculation, merchandise, literary efforts, idling and the various employments which men are *forced* into in this unparalleled country, unparalleled for good and evil, have again settled into primitive operations, and I am again a mountaineer, my castle a cabin, my frills a red shirt, my hope in the mines, and my heart with my family beyond the Missouri. But gracious heaven! what a change two years has produced.

True Delta, October 8, 1851.

When I detailed to you, in my first letters, the toils and hardships of the miner exemplified in my own experience, I little thought that in so brief a space of time such a mighty change would occur. Where we then climbed mountains weary and fainting under the heavy loads we carried on our backs, where by difficult paths a mule brought us our hard and homely fare, where the bare means of existence was all we expected—now good roads are opened with daily stages running over them from the principal towns in the Valley; these roads are lined with comfortable houses for the accommodation of travellers, where the luxuries of life may be had in profusion, and a vast number of teams loaded with all the necessaries and comforts for man are constantly passing. Villages and towns are springing up among the hills which exhibit the life and bustle of trading towns, and society,though by no means purified of its excrescences, begins to assume the form of civilization.

Immense works are undertaken which might daunt the resolution of wealthy capitalists at home, and are carried through with success. In short, in every direction you behold a sublime spectacle of the energy and indomitable perseverance of a free people, who think and act for themselves, and make science and art their slaves in securing the talisman of Earth—gold. Rivers and creeks are turned from their channels and carried by canals miles along mountains, over hills, across gulches, by means of aqueducts, for forty miles or more, thus distributing the indispensable element to the miner for separating the gold from the earth and opening to man rich deposits which could not be worked without water.

The water of Deer Creek is thus turned and by ditches, troughs and hose is carried many miles in various directions, giving employmen to thousands who without it would be idle; and a canal is in progress, to be forty miles in length, which will turn the water of Bear River from its bed for a similar purpose, as well as expose its 132 own rich deposits to the miner. Another gigantic scheme was in agitation, and the stock of the company was subscribed. This was to turn the Yuba for similar purposes, high in the mountains, with a canal of sufficient capacity to float lumber and ice to the Valley. It was then projected to continue the canal across the plain to the mouth of the American River, thus supplying Sacramento City with lumber and ice—the latter an essential article in this fervid climate. The engineer assured me the route and work were feasible, except about forty or fifty rods, where it would have to pass along a perpendicular cañon so high that there were no means of erecting works for a flume, and so many difficulties presented themselves at that point which seemed to require the whole wealth of California to overcome, that the plan was reluctantly abandoned, for the present at least.

Since the discovery of gold in its matrix, which are the quartz veins extending apparently through the whole length and breadth of the country, a new impulse has been given to the energies of Californians. There is at this place perhaps more machinery in active operation at this time than at any other point in the State, although it is highly probable that many other places are quite as rich which still remain undiscovered. At this time there are six steam quartz mills and one water mill in operation, and one steam mill and another water-crushing mill are in progress of erection. Instead of one hill and one vein of quartz, it appears by examination that many veins exist in nearly all the

hills in this region, and this gives such a certainty for continuing operations for a term of years—a permanency of business—that the mountain valleys are being taken up for farms and cultivated; good buildings are erected in the villages, and this hitherto wild and inhospitable mountain country is fast assuming the settled condition of the active, bustling, yet permanent towns of the iron mountains of Pennsylvania.

Notwithstanding the horde of villains who throng in our midst, the high character of the miners and operatives for intelligence and various acquirements still deservedly continues. Among them I have for a neighbor and friend, Mr. Frederick M. Catherwood, celebrated the world over as an artist and traveler.* You would little dream that that modest, quiet man, standing by that puffing, stamping, noisy crushing mill, without a particle of ostentation in his manner, dressed in a plain, coarse, drab corduroy dreadnought coat and pants, with high coarse leather boots reaching above his knees, his head covered with a broadbrim California hat and his somewhat 133 prominent nose bridging a pair of spectacles, was the artist who illustrated the admirable works of Stephens' *Petraea* and *Yucatan*, with drawings taken on the spot.* It is even he, and if you would make him blush, why speak to him of his works? He has too much modesty to intrude himself on your notice, but if you will draw him out you will find him a gentleman as well as an artist, and he is the president of his company and one of the proprietors of the mill.

(1799-1856). A native of England, Catherwoodwas also a railroad promoter. He came to San Francisco in 1849, took an active interest in a Panama railroad, and was now associated with the Benicia-Marysville railroad survey. He returned to England in 1852 and was lost on the steamer *Pacific*, never heard of after leaving Liverpool for New York in 1856. Frederick Boase, *Modern English Biography* (3 vols., London, 1892-1901), I, 571; Victor W. Von Hagen, *Frederick Catherwood, Archt*. (New York, 1950), 3, 110-113.
Lloyd Stephens (1805-1852). Known as “the American traveler,” he wrote *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia, Petraea, and the Holy Land* (2 vols., New York, 1838); *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (2 vols., New York, 1841), with sixty-five plates by Catherwood; and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (2 vols., New York, 1843). Stephens was also a steamship and railroad executive, associated with a transatlantic line, the Hudson River Railroad, and the Panama Railroad; he went with Catherwood to South America in 1839 on a confidential mission for President Van Buren. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

A year ago there were no inhabitants here.—Occasionally a solitary miner might be seen resting his weary limbs in the shade of a magnificent pine, or while prospecting under the weight of his blankets, mining tools and transient supply of pork and hard bread, keeping a cautious watch with

his hand on his trusty rifle to guard against surprise, not knowing but in another instant an arrow from the bow of some lurking treacherous savage might terminate his toil and earthly career at one and the same moment. Now in this immediate vicinity there are probably two thousand men at work, with all the comforts of life within their reach, and the only danger is from the robber and midnight assassin, and these are now held in check. Families are coming in, and although female influence is but little felt, still the germ is laid, and the lower mines will soon present that feature in the happiness of isolated man.

I must confess, however, that my former ideas of the purity and stern morality of the opposite sex have been somewhat lowered—perhaps my ideas have been too exalted—but it too often happens here that females who have borne unexceptionable characters at home adopt the code of morals of the country and instead of endeavoring to stem the current, float along with it. I am no casuist and will not seek for the cause. This sentiment may draw down upon me the frowns of my fair countrywomen at home, but I can't help it, and as I am no candidate for even a place in their affections, I shall take the world as I find it and ask no favors.

Near us is an Indian ranch filled with dirty, squalid, disgusting savages, but as I have given you a picture of Indian life, I will not advert to it now. They are peaceable and quiet, and their chief is friendly to the whites. The nights are getting cold, and my blankets are scarcely sufficient to keep me warm, but the days are hot.

A. D.

33. Grass Valley, September 29, 1851.*

SCIENCE is progressive. The wonderful development of the power of steam by Fulton was only the prelude to vast and material improvement, until it has at length reached the perfection exhibited at the present day. It is so in mechanics—it is the same in astronomy, in geology; it will be so in mining and its *modus operandi*. On the first discovery of gold in the placers of California, the first mode of washing was by the pan; then a rough rocker was substituted, which was subsequently

much improved, and quicksilver introduced. This was succeeded by the Long Tom and then by the sluice, by which it was found that dirt which would not pay by the pan or rocker yielded a handsome profit, and ground which had been passed over as worthless was found to contain gold in such quantities that fortunes were made. When the first quartz veins were worked the specimens, or those pieces in which gold was visible only, were saved, and these were pounded out by hand, until by repeated experiments and the introduction of machinery it was found that much of the rock which had been discarded was really rich and contained gold enough to make its extraction a profitable labor. Another discovery followed, that the dirt in immediate proximity with, and in which the quartz was imbedded, was rich, often richer than the quartz itself, and it was not until many tons had been thrown away or mixed up with valueless dirt that this fact became known, and 135 now, on visiting a mine, you will see its pile of quartz on one side and its pay dirt, as it is termed, on the other. The first mill erected here was a small one, by water power, which proved a failure. This proceeded from the want of a proper application of the power. The next was a twelve-horsepower steam engine, which was abandoned or sold out by the company, after involving them in debt. Another steam mill of the same power was put into operation and by being properly constructed and prudently managed, was successful, and this company became the purchasers of the first steam mill, and after spending money enough to get it into the right condition and making such improvements in the mode of saving gold as were suggested by their experiments, this mill was made effective.

True Delta, November 5, 1851.

Other mills were then erected, having the benefit of the experience of the pioneers, and they have gradually improved one upon the other, until all are now able to save much more of the precious metal than it was possible to do in the first experiment—enabling them to crush poorer rock and at less prices than at first, and make a profit to themselves and to the miner.

Experience develops facts, too, which are of the utmost importance to those who would engage in gold working. The estimates of the capabilities of the machines for crushing have generally been too high—where it was confidently asserted that thirty and forty tons of rock could be crushed in a day, it is found that ten to fifteen is the result, by the power applied, and when the power of

the engine has been called from twenty-five to thirty-five or forty horse, it may go from fifteen to twenty or twenty-five. Sufficient power is absolutely important, and too much is far preferable to too little. The expense of running an hundred-horsepower engine is but a trifle more than that of a ten-horse, being chiefly in the amount of fuel consumed, and when forty or fifty tons of rock is actually crushed in a day, the profit to the mill as well as to the miner is proportionably great. Poorer rock can be worked, and at a less price, and it is a mistaken idea to suppose that all veins are equally auriferous. Some will yield little or nothing, others will barely pay, while some are decidedly rich, and these varieties not unfrequently occur in the same hill, and there is a difference, too, in the same vein, but so far as my experience goes, the same vein will give a fair general average. While some veins will yield an average of five cents, others will give only three, two, or perhaps less, and a mill of forty horsepower can make money in working a medium average of rock, while a tenhorse would run in debt. Instead of there being a single general vein running through the country, with lateral veins, as I once supposed, we find several veins often in the same hill, some rich, some of medium value, others of little value. An experienced eye will detect the quality of the rock at a glance; that is, he can tell with much probability whether the vein will pay for working or not, and if 136 there is doubt, he can determine by a simple process with much certainty, so that money and labor may be saved before large investments are made. And in prospecting too, a man accustomed to it will find the locality of a ledge by a process he can hardly explain, where others would pass it unnoticed. There are mills here which are working on three differnet principles. First—the stampers, by steam; second—a small water mill with six stampers on the triphammer principle, with a flutter wheel about thirty inches in diameter, in which there is a great waste of power as it is arranged; and the third is upon the Chilian system, having four uprightcrushing wheels, the individual weight of which can be made to reach twenty-five hundred pounds. This last is nearly ready to run. The two first do the work very well; as for the last, if I may be allowed to hazard an opinion, it will, I think, be found that it will crush the rock admirably, as well perhaps as is desired, but that it cannot crush as great an amount in a given time as the stampers. Still this remains to be seen. One apparent advantage that it suggests is that the amalgamation proceeds with the crushing, and hot water will be used, which will expand the quicksilver, giving it a greater surface and consequently collecting more gold than by the ordinary amalgamating process. Another

water mill is in progress of erection about two miles below here by Mr. Kelly, having a water wheel of thirty feet in diameter, where there will be not only a great saving of power but thousands of dollars a year in the way of wood, engineers, firemen, wood-choppers, &c., &c. His mill will probably work as well as any in this vicinity.

Experiment has proved that only about one half of the gold is now saved by the improvements which have been made since the commencement of operations. A small quantity of rock which had been worked over was submitted to chemical analysis, when it yielded in addition at the rate of ninety dollars per ton, showing that an ample field for investigation and experiment is still open to the scientific and ingenious. You will frequently hear of rich specimens being found in quartz. This is so, but do not confound this with the average yield.—All paying veins will occasionally produce rich specimens, and although it is desirable to see gold visible to the naked eye in quartz, it is not necessary in order to determine whether it contains gold or not.

I do not know that any positive maximum of the amount which an engine can crush or not has been arrived at, but suppose it will be from half a ton to a ton to the single horsepower, carrying the necessary gearing and machinery. But one thing is certain, powerful engines are more profitable than small ones, and I think that in a short time the small engines in the country will be abandoned, to be superseded by more powerful ones. Lest I be thought too prolix, I will bring this subject to a close, only observing that what I write 137 or have written has been according to the best information I could obtain at the time. Since my first communication on quartz mining, I have acquired more particular knowledge. It still continues to excite a lively interest in our State. Among other distinguished visitors to Grass Valley, General Atocha,* of whom you are cognizant, has made a tour of observation, and it gave me pleasure to afford him all the knowledge I possessed of mines and mining. I found him an intelligent and agreeable gentleman, with enlarged views and a mind capable of formingand carrying out great designs, and I have spent no time more agreeably in California than the two evenings and one day that we were together. I sincerely hope that the result of his investigations may prove profitable both to himself and Mexico. Ex-Governor Blanshard, of

Vancouver Island,* and Captain Fanshawe, of the British Navy,* were here at the same time, and all seemed delighted with their visit. It is a pleasure to meet gentlemen of any nation.

Colonel A. J. Atocha was the personal representative of General Antonio López de Santa Anna in the U. S., 1846-1848. Wilfrid H. Callcott, *Santa Anna* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1936), 230, 248, 262.
Richard Blanshard, first governor of Vancouver, left the island August 27, 1851, to return to England. Bancroft, *History of British Columbia*, 1792-1887 (San Francisco, 1887), 265-282.
Edward G. Fanshawe (1814-1906), captain, Royal Navy, 1845; rear admiral, 1863; lord of the admiralty, 1865; vice admiral, 1871; K. C. B., 1881. *Dictionary of National Biography, Second Supplement*.

The Sierra Nevada Quartz Mining Company, of which I have spoken in a former communication, have sold out their mine to Dr. J. Delavan, the agent of the Rocky Bar Company,* and he is erecting machinery and driving ahead with characteristic Yankee energy.—Some of the mills have taken out eight hundred to a thousand dollars per day, though this must always vary according to the quality of the rock and other circumstances; some days more, somedays less.

Dr. James Delavan. Sacramento *Placer Times*, November 24, 1849. The Rocky Bar Company was “memorable as the first of its class to mine on a large scale in the pockets of Eastern investors.” *Pen-Knife Sketches*, xiii.

34. Shasta City, October 20, 1851.*

THE AIR was bracing but not cold when at sunrise on the morning of the 4th, I took a seat with the driver on the box of the stage for Shasta City, whose local is among the foothills and at the very southern base of that rugged broken range of mountains which stretch from the extreme northern end of the Valley of the Sacramento through to Oregon, and thence in wild and solemn grandeur through the British and Russian possessions in North America, and interrupted only by the narrow Strait of Behring into Asia. Crossing the Sacramento as we left town, we were soon gaily rolling over the bosom of the broad Valley, with the bold dark outline of the Coast Range looming up on the west, and on the east the Sierra Nevada with its broad foothills seemed gradually to rise till at a great distance it blended with the sky like sombre clouds without indicating its own extreme altitude, still presenting a prominent and vivid component part in the charming view. Occasionally we were driving along the banks of the river through groves of evergreen oak and then launching out into a tule swamp miles in length, overflowed by the river in flood seasons, making a large

lake, when about eleven o'clock we reached the city of Fremont, our first change.* This important town is situated near the confluence of Rio de las Plumas (Feather River) with the Sacramento, and stands an example of the speculative *energy* of the Californians of '49. Like every other town on a navigable stream it is at the head of navigation, though steamboats do run an hundred miles above. It contains about forty houses, twelve of which are occupied by families; the others are to rent on easy terms to any who would like a quiet nook far from the noise and bustle of the city. In the fall and winter of '49 it possessed extensive water privileges, for during the overflow the communications between the houses was by means of boats, and an acquaintance of mine who was the wealthy proprietor of eight hundreds lots in the city assured me the fishing on them was excellent. For any person desirous of making a *permanent* investment an excellent opportunity is offered here.

True Delta, December 7, 1851.

A town across the Sacramento River from Verona (formerly Vernon). Fremont was founded in 1849 and abandoned not long after Delano's visit. H. E. and E. G. Rensch and Mildred B. Hoover, *Historic Spots in California: Valley and Sierra Counties* (Stanford, 1933), 535.

Leaving Fremont with its reminiscences, we drove along the Sacramento for a few miles, when our road launched out upon the plain, where for fifty miles there was no water, only in wells dug at 139 intervals of eighteen to twenty miles, and where much of the way the tules and vegetable mould indicated submersion in flood season, making it by no means a desirable location for the biped creation. The plain was dotted with large herds of elk, antelope, and deer which in seeming security scarcely moved beyond gunshot from us,barely raising their heads with curiosity as we passed, as if to enquire what the devil we were doing on their stamping ground, while we on our part were smacking our lips with the poetic thought of a broiled steak from their haunches. About sixty miles above Sacramento City, between the Sacramento and Feather rivers and about midway of the plain, rises a strange, queer, isolated old mountaincalled the Buttes,* that looks as if it had been one of the hills which the fallen angels had used for ammunition in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* There it stands, where the Valley is twenty miles wide on either side, lifting its bare, craggy, misshapen, undescribable brown peaks two thousand feet towardsheaven, baring its rough brows to the elements, its furrowed and rent sides attesting the power of time and might of the Almighty, and

a beacon to the bewildered traveler on the plain. It is one of the strange things of California which defies my power of description, and the only way I can get at it is to leave a blank thus, and let you fill it with an artist's pencil to suit your own imagining.

Sutter Buttes, Colusa County.

As the sun disappeared behind the dark hills of the Coast Range, his rays still shone brightly on the high crest of the Buttes, and it seemed as if twilight was approaching before the old mountain gave up the contest for light and fairly bade us good night. A little after dark we were sitting down to a glorious supper at the city of Colusa, a thriving capital of just twelve houses, beautifully situated on the west bank of the river and of course at the head of navigation—that is, for steamboats that don't run higher. Adjoining the town is a large village of Indians.* I was strolling along the river by starlight after having discussed a savory elk steak, when I was startled by an unearthly yell, a sound of lamentation from the direction of the Indian village. Curious to know the cause of this sudden outcry, I bent my steps in that direction. Before every lodge were seated several women and children who were piteously lamenting with tears of grief coursing down their cheeks, while in groups the men sat silent or talking in subdued tones, and I never saw a whole community who seemed more grief-stricken than these untutored and naked savages. An old warrior replied to my enquiry by informing me that five of their men had accompanied a gentleman of Colusa to the mines to dig for gold. Four of them had set out on their return 140 alone, when they were assaulted by the mountain Indians and two of them killed; the others, making their escape, had just arrived with the sad intelligence. With them it was a national calamity and their grief was as sincere as it was touching. And death was rife among them. Supported in the arms of three or four squaws a woman was dying. The death rattle was in her throat, and before morning she too was numbered with the dead. All night long the wailings were continued, and as we left early the following morning we observed a large circle of squaws dancing a slow and measured tread around the body of their departed sister. May the Great Spirit be propitiated and the soul of the poor savage be made happy accordingto its capacity.

Wintun Indians. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, 351-390.

Our nearest approach to the Coast Range was probably not nearer than fifteen miles. We could see that a range of lesser but rugged hills extended along the base of the main range with apparently a valley between them, but from this the mountains seemed to rise in broken and abrupt masses to a great height, more like the Sierra, from the desert on the eastern side of the snowy mountains. They appear too broken to admit of a wagon road, and only here and there show signs of vegetation, but up to this time it is a sealed and mysterious country opening a new field of enterprise and of toil to some future explorer. All I could learn was that a party of men had once attempted to make explorations. Teh mountains. They were gone from home six days, had ascertained that gold existed in the hills, that there were fine valleys with beautiful streams flowing through them and an abundance of magnificent pines, but that the country was inhabited by bold and warlike tribes who were hostile and treacherous and that an ingress among those lofty hills was attended with difficulty and danger.* But the time will soon come when the attention of the indomitable Yankee will be diverted from the eastern mountains towards the West, and then the tales of suffering, of toil and blood, of savage warfare and Christian cupidity, will find a locale in the broad, broken belt between the Pacific Ocean and the Valley of the Sacramento. As we approached the termination of the Valley towards the close of the third day, the ground became more uneven, and near Red Bluff we entered the foothills which were the stepping stones to the united ranges of the Coast and Sierra Nevada mountains. On the left were the lofty, rugged peaks of the Coast, before us the Trinity and Sacramentomountains stood out in bold relief, and on the east and north the Sierra was surmounted by the snow-clad points of Lawson's Peak and Shasta Butte, the latter rising like a white cloud an hundred and twenty miles distant, attaining the immense altitude of thirteen thousand feet.* The road 141 became more broken, the hills higher, till at dark we arrived at Shasta City, the extreme point attainable by wagons in this direction in the mountains. Beyond this, mules alone can thread the narrow and intricate passes of the hills, and the constant arrival and departure of large pack trains with supplies for thousands of miners in that isolated country gave the town an appearance of life and bustle quite unexpected.

The Lassik Indians inhabited Mendocino County. *Ibid*., 143-144.
Mount Shasta is actually 14,161 feet high.

Here the stores were well filled with merchandise, the hotels afforded comfortable quarters and their tables were loaded with not only the comforts but the luxuries of California, and the dream of hardship is only to be realized in the mountain country beyond. From this point northward it is necessary to go with some show of force and to keep a constant guard at night to prevent attacks from the Indians, and during the day it is not safe to leave the train even for a short distance. Yet an hundred and fifty miles north of Shasta City is a rich valley, thirty to fifty miles long by three to five wide, taking its name from the gigantic Butte at its head and affording a local habitation, even in this distant and isolated region, for another town of five hundred houses, called Shasta Butte City.* Would you believe it that such a town exists in this remote region? It is even so. Supplies are brought by mules from the south, while on the north a very feasible wagon road is opened to Oregon City, from whence supplies are also drawn; so that a communication is now open through the wildest imaginable country from California to Oregon. The geography of the Cascade Mountains is no longer a mystery, and the rivers are explored, rich valleys are found, and their cultivation already begun. The northern Indians are a larger, more intelligent and more warlike race than those of California. They wear clothes and live in log or wood dwellings and are very ingenious in many articles of domestic manufacture, while a portion of their country is valuable for agricultural purposes.*

New Yreka. Gudde, California Place Names.

Battles between the whites on the one hand and the Shasta, Pit River, Rogue River, and Modoc Indians on the other were fought from 1851 on, culminating in the bloody Modoc War of 1873, which cost the lives of eighty-one whites and uncounted Indians. After this the Indians remained on reservations assigned to them. Caughey, *California*, 383-386.

In the neighborhood of Shasta I observed vast quantities of auriferous quartz, more than can be exhausted in hundreds of years, and I also saw many specimens which were brought in from Shasta Butte City, from Scott and Trinity rivers and their affluents, indeed in all directions, north and eastward, for an hundred miles or more. The imagination can scarcely stop at estimating the amount of mineral wealth still existing undistrubed in its matrix in the northern mountains; yet, while it is there, men will not stop to calculate the expense, the difficulty and hazard of life in obtaining it.

A. D.

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35. Parkman, Ohio, June, 1852.*

EDS. *True Delta* —My last communication was from Grass Valley, California, dated, I think, in February. I do not know whether it reached you or not, but it was my last from the land of gold.* On my arrival at home, I became fully aware of the vastness of the throng which is hurrying on to distress, to misery, and immense suffering by a headlong journey across the plains. If a true representation of the condition of California would have any effect in preventing individual suffering, the readers of the *True Delta* would be benefited, for your columns have set forth these things in their proper light always, and to me it seems strange that people should become so infatuated as to rush into dangers with eyes wide open. California is indeed a great country, with a beautiful climate and fertile soil, and in this last particular I have been compelled to change my early opinion.* And gold is there in such quantities that I do not believe that the labor of a century can exhaust it. But because such is the fact, do not let any man say, “If it is there, I can get it.” There are difficulties in the way which are insuperable. There are just as smart men there who are as industrious, as energetic and prudent, as the best who are now on their way. Three years' experience *proves* that where one of these energetic men is successful, hundreds are scarcely making a living. From the commencement to the present moment the continual cry of “new discoveries—rich diggings,” has been brought to the public eye, and how many have been successful? Not one tenth part of those engaged in mining, and those are mostly of that class of men whose nerves and sinews are braced to stand the severe labor by practice from childhood. Thousands of those who cannot endure the labor of the mines, or who have been unsuccessful, have returned to the Valley and are exercising the various trades and professions to which they were accustomed at home, so that every trade is overrepresented, and profits are cut down to a living business—in many instances scarcely affording that—and before I left, hundreds were unable to obtain employment for their board. And

when you add fifty thousand souls to those already there, the number of helpless ones will increase rather than diminish.

True Delta, June 23, 1852. The editor writes: “The following interesting letter from a gentleman whose former contributions to the columns of the *True Delta*, from California, excited much attention, will not be without interest at this time, when the tide of emigration is again rapidly setting towards the modern Ophir.”
Apparently it was not received.
Cf. p. 21.
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There may be five thousand farms opened in California this season, perhaps more, and next year double that number. Farming at this moment is profitable, but will it continue so to the end of time? When I first went there, all our vegetables were brought from the Sandwich Islands, Australia, and Oregon, and a small part from Spanish America, and the prices were exorbitant.

Now California raises her own vegetables, or nearly so, and in such abundance that prices have fallen almost immeasurably. For instance, in 1849-50 potatoes sold in San Francisco from twenty to thirty cents per pound. These were brought from abroad. Now they are sold, of a superior quality and raised at home, at from three to five cents. Importation has virtually ceased. Flour is still imported, but in one year California will raise wheat enough for home consumption; in two there will be a surplus, and with no outlet prices must fall so much as to reduce farming to a mere living profit. The soil of California is capable of producing a greater amount than that of our Western prairies even. Sixty and eighty bushels of wheat to the acre is common. I have many statistical items in my possession attesting its agricultural capacities, and you know my early opinion was at antipodes with this. Now all this in political economy is well, and speaks well for the capacity of the State; but when we reflect that beyond home consumption the market will be limited, the natural inference is that farming in a short time will be no more profitable than other kinds of business.

And those who cannot work cannot live. The immense emigration of this year* will probably keep the prices of provisions up for the season. They may, in fact, advance, while the price of labor will decline and thousands seek employment as they do now, in vain; but at the moment there is a surplus, which will be within the next two years, there will be no sale. The only business that I know of now that is not being overdone is lumbering. The mountains are accessible for wagons and

railroads and can furnish the lumber which is now imported, and will do so as soon as the prices of labor and hauling are sufficiently reduced to compete with importing prices. The country is large enough and productive enough to support a dense population, and individual suffering would be less if it was filled up by degrees; but one great difficulty is, too many are rushing in at once before the way is sufficiently prepared for them. Now a limited number can cross the plains safely and with comfort if properly provided, but this year there are too many going at once. In addition to the stock actually required to draw the wagons on the road, a large number of cattle are being driven for market. They will generally reach the Rocky Mountains in safety—that is, there will be grass enough to sustain the cattle. But immediately on going through the South Pass 144 the desert country commences, grass will be difficult to obtain and, I believe, impossible for so great a number. The consequence will be that the cattle of emigrant trains will die, and families will have a *terra firma* shipwreck, hundreds of miles from human aid. If they have money to duplicate their teams from droves, they may be partially relieved; but very many will not be able to pay the California prices which will be asked, and they will be left to get along the best way they can, which will be on foot, or die.

The climax of the Gold Rush may dated 1852, when more than 100,000 went to California. Bancroft, *History of California*, VII, 696.

We shall probably receive as heart-rending accounts of the sufferings of the present emigration across the plains as any which have preceded it. After the emigration of 1850, such was the waste of property on the road that travelers from Salt Lake or between trading posts in the region, where there was little or no wood, were scarcely troubled a single night to collect fuel to cook with, for the wagons abandoned and the furniture, handles of picks, shovels, axes, &c., &c., furnished them an abundant supply, and this will probably be the case after the present emigration has passed.

I had intended to have spoken of the Nicaragua route in this communication, but it is already long enough. With my experience in crossing the plains I would rather take a family to California by the land route, provided the emigration *did not exceed ten thousand*, than through Central America, with the present facilities of traveling up the San Juan River and to San Juan del Sur. As it is, I would not risk their lives this year, either way.

A.D—.

36. Parkman, Ohio, August 1, 1852.*

THE IMMENSE resources of California, as yet only partially developed, afford to the political economist and to business men a fruitful theme of contemplation. Although there is now much individual suffering and misfortune, the elements of prosperity are at work which, in an unparalleled short period in the history of 145 nations, must place it among the most prominent States of the Union for wealth and extensive business operations. With a most prolific soil, a genial climate, with vast mineral wealth, the genius of the people only requires the fostering protection of a liberal government to develop these resources, and where public effort fails in many instances to carry out important ends, individual associations will not be wanting for their consummation. In a country so new as California, having so vast a field for varied enterprise, Government cannot at once effect all the facilities necessary for the transaction of the immense business carried on by its citizens; and the commercial world, but for individual association, would labor under immense disadvantages. The transmission of dust and coin from one extreme point to another, from the most distant mines over almost impracticable mountain roads to the Atlantic States, would be next to impossible, with certainty, by any Government provision. The merchant at home or in the cities along the Pacific seaboard might look in vain for remittances if dependent on Post Offices, and at isolated points the poor, toil-worn miner would live for months without the gratification of hearing from home or of sending a portion of his hard-earned gains to those who are dearer to his memory than life, were it not for the express companies which individual enterprise has established. These, in fact, have grown out of the necessity of the case, and by system, energy, and perseverance have grown into an important link in the great chain of commercial enterprise.

True Delta, August 12, 1852. The superscription is a glowing valedictory, but no more than Delano deserved: “We have pleasure in publishing the following letter from one of the ablest correspondents it was our good fortune to secure in California in the early days of the gold discoveries. The writer, Mr. A. Delano, left Ohio [actually Illinois] among the first of the bold adventurers to the shores of the Pacific, and passed through the perilous trials which then beset those who heroically braved the dangers of flood and field in their exciting explorations. His letters to this paper were graphic, truthful, eloquent and patriotic, overflowing with generous sentiment and the spirit of manly independence so characteristic of the sons of the glorious West. Should he again return to California—

and who that has once been there can long remain away?—we hope to hear from him frequently, as of yore, and shall always cheerfully and gladly give him a conspicuous place in the columns of the *True Delta*."

At first established for the speedy transmission of letters, money, and small packages from one important town to another along the principal roads and thoroughfares of the Atlantic States, by degrees they have spread, like the veins of the human system from the principal arteries, not only over the body corporate of our own country, but their fibres reach Europe, Asia—in fact, the whole civilized globe; and no country has felt their vivifying influence more than California. These connected links reach every mountain and dell where civilized man finds an abiding place. Almost every bar and diggings beyond the reach of mail arrangements has its connecting express line, and the glistening eye of the sunburnt miner, as through them he receives the missive of love from home, attests the estimation in which they are held in California. But for them, how many hearts would be sad—how many hopes disappointed!

Why, I myself had toiled a year, suffering all that human nature could endure on the plains and in the mines, without hearing a single word from my family, and although they had written monthly by the mail, the first letter I received to tell me they were still alive was delivered into my hands by a mountain express.* To Californians and those connected with them, this is a matter of infinite 146 importance, and a grand consideration is that of responsibility. No man likes to trust valuable packages to irresponsible hands, and it is a matter of public congratulation that companies of undoubted means, as well as of indomitable energy, are in existence. Livingston and Wells* are known among the successful pioneers of expresses, and I see by the public papers that they are extending their operations by association to California, under the name of Wells, Fargo and Company. These veterans of the Express are too well known for comment. Some of those connected with them I have known from childhood,* and I speak understandingly when I say that more energetic, faithful, and perfectly responsible men do not exist in any express company than these. They have commenced their California Express with an actual capital of three hundred thousand dollars, have contracted for the transmission of parcels with the U. S. Mail steamers, thus avoiding the possibility of delay, and they send a trusty messenger with every ship. Their

arrangements for crossing the Isthmus are such that speed and certainty are assured, and drafts drawn by them are honored as surely as those of any bank in the Union.

Cf. p. 42.
Johnston Livingston was associated with Henry Wells in an express business in New York State, 1845-1854, before the formation of Wells, Fargo and Company. Henry Wells, *Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Present Condition of the Express System* (Albany, 1864), 10.
Cf. p. 64.

The ramifications of their express will extend to every mining district in California, as it does now to nearly every town in the Atlantic States; and the estimation in which they are held on the Atlantic will insure their success on the Pacific side of the continent. As an old miner, knowing the wants and feelings of that busy class of our California community, I most humbly wish them success. I sail on the 5th for San Francisco, and you will hear from the again as usual, from time to time.*

But this apparently was the last Delano letter published in the *True Delta*.

Yours,

A. DELANO

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